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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States parties due in 1992

Addendum

NORWAY

[30 August 1993]

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I. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Norway was one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on 26 January 1990. The Storting subsequently approved ratification on 8 November 1990, and the Convention was thereafter formally ratified on 8 January 1991 and made effective in Norway as of 7 February 1991.

2. The Government had submitted Proposition No. 104 to the Storting (1989-1990) prior to the Storting debate on the ratification of the Convention. This proposition included a thorough legal review of the areas covered by the Convention in relation to Norwegian legislation.

3. During the final ratification debate in the Storting, it was decided that a reservation would be made with regard to paragraph 2.b.V of article 40.

A. Legal review of criminal cases (art. 40.2.b.V)

4. Paragraph 2.b.V of article 40 concerns the right of the child to legal review by a higher competent authority or court in connection with decisions related to the violation of criminal law. Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights contains a similar provision. Norway made a reservation concerning this provision when it ratified that instrument.

5. Norwegian legislation relating to criminal procedure may be inconsistent with the Convention on this point. Pursuant to section 335 of Act No. 25 relating to Criminal Procedure of 22 May 1981, an appeal to the Supreme Court may not be made on the grounds of errors committed in the assessment of the evidence with regard to the question of guilt. This means that no legal remedy exists for the provision of a full review of criminal cases when the High Court is the court of first instance. In such cases, it is possible to submit a request for a case to be reopened, but this right has certain limitations (cf. section 389 ff of the Criminal Procedure Act).

6. There is no unconditional right to demand legal review of the assessment of evidence with regard to the question of guilt in cases that are decided in the municipal district and municipal city courts (cf. section 370 of the Criminal Procedure Act), which stipulates that the consent of the Interlocutory Appeals Committee of the Supreme Court is required before a new trial may take place.

7. An official committee has recently presented a report proposing comprehensive changes in the criminal procedures related to these issues (Official Norwegian Report No. 28 of 1992). The Committee proposes that all criminal cases be heard by district or city courts as the court of first instance, providing an opportunity for full review by the High Court.

8. The Committee thoroughly discussed the question of whether these proposals could enable Norway to withdraw its reservations to the United Nations Conventions in question. The above-mentioned proposals for changes in legislation will remove the most important grounds for Norway's reservations, and it is likely that the reservation in connection with paragraph 2.b.V of article 40 will also be re-evaluated in this connection.

B. Special priority areas for policies related to children in Norway

9. From 1989 to 1991, important areas of responsibility for policies related to children and family affairs have been coordinated and placed under one ministry. The present Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is the result of this coordination. Matters which in other countries are traditionally the responsibility of a Ministry of Justice or Social Affairs, such as the Marriage Act, the Children's Act and the Child Welfare Act, have in Norway been transferred to the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. The intention of this coordination is to facilitate implementation of measures for children and families, and to allow the various measures to be seen in a broader perspective.

10. The Government is continuing its efforts to achieve full nursery school coverage before the next century. Further details on nursery school coverage may be found in chapter VI.

11. The Government aims to further develop and expand extracurricular activity programmes, which are after-school programmes for pupils in grades 1 to 3. Further details may be found in chapter VII.

12. The issue of advancing the start of school to the year the child attains the age of six was decided by the Storting in 1993. The Government aims to introduce a 10-year primary and lower secondary school at the same time. Further details may be found in chapter VII.

13. An educational reform in the upper secondary school to take effect in the 1994/95 school year will entitle all adolescents between the ages of 16 and 19 to a three-year upper secondary course of education qualifying for higher education or a trade. At the same time, all of the counties will be required to follow up adolescents who drop out of such courses, or who have not applied to any schools and do not have any work. Further details may be found in chapter VII.

14. The parental leave period is extended. As of 1 April 1993, parental leave is increased to 52 weeks with 80 per cent compensation for lost wages; three of these weeks must be taken before birth. Further details may be found in chapter VI.

15. A three-year National Development Programme for Child Welfare was initiated in January 1991. The Programme is designed to create child welfare services which provide help at the right time and for the benefit of the child. Considerable funds have been allocated to the Programme, and clear objectives and performance criteria have been stipulated. The Storting has allocated NOK 300 million for 1991, NOK 507 million for 1992, and NOK 490 million for 1993 for the realization of the Programme's objectives. The funds are distributed to the municipalities and counties on the basis of applications for expansion of their child welfare capacity or programmes.

16. The Programme has had predefined programme objectives every year; in 1993, these objectives were adapted to the Child Welfare Act:

(a) After a report has been evaluated, any investigation must be initiated as soon as possible and concluded within three months (six months under special circumstances);

(b) No child or adolescent shall have to wait more than six weeks for measures to be implemented by municipalities or counties after a decision has been made;

(c) Efforts to restructure and rationalize child welfare services shall be accelerated;

(d) The quality and competence of the child welfare services shall be improved at all levels;

(e) As of 31 December 1993, all municipalities must have prepared a binding plan for preventive measures to ensure, for example, that as many children and parents as possible can stay together.

17. Experience so far indicates that the objectives of the National Development Programme will be achieved in the course of the programme period. The municipalities have eliminated the backlog of unprocessed reports to the child welfare services. Routines have now been introduced to ensure that the municipalities process reports in the course of one week and that the investigations and measures implemented are in accordance with the provisions of the Child Welfare Act. The trend exhibited by the child welfare services during the first two years has been a marked increase in new assistance programmes for children living at home and a significantly smaller increase in the number of cases where alternative care is used.

18. There is considerable emphasis on ensuring that measures are of a sufficiently high standard, so that children and adolescents receive the assistance and care that is necessary and adapted to their individual needs. The municipalities are required to prepare binding plans for each individual child. These plans will provide a continuous picture of the need for child welfare services in the municipalities. A broader, more differentiated apparatus for children and adolescents who are at risk, which is able to provide prompt and proper assistance, will be further developed. In order to improve these services, more emergency and short-term and long-term places, such as foster homes for children and adolescents and places for parents and children, will be established. In 1992, 650 new places for alternative care were established in the counties.

19. Efficient child welfare services with a high standard of quality require good organization and expertise, and close cooperation across professional and administrative boundaries. Two projects, "Alternative Organization of Child Welfare Services" and "New Organization of County Child Welfare Services", are important with regard to the testing of alternative ways of organizing child welfare services in the municipalities and counties. Emphasis is placed on trial projects involving alternative forms of political and administrative organization, particularly those involving the reorganization of public departments and political committees which have the primary responsibility for children and adolescents who are at risk.

20. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has evaluated the training capacity and the content of basic training programmes. Refresher programmes, including a leadership training programme, have been started at several institutions of higher learning. The development of a further training programme at several institutions of higher learning in 1993 is another objective. Research on child welfare services has grown. The Norwegian Research Council for Applied Social Science (now part of the Research Council of Norway) coordinates research activities. Previously, this took place through the "Children of the Welfare State" programme. As of 1992/93, however, an independent subprogramme for research on child welfare services has been initiated.

21. A plan of action against sexual abuse was presented in June 1992. The programme was prepared jointly by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. The primary objective of the plan is to prevent the sexual abuse of children, to uncover sexual abuse and to give sexually abused children prompt and proper assistance and treatment. Further details may be found in chapter VIII. These efforts will be followed up by a report to the Storting that is to be presented by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in the summer of 1993.

C. Efforts related to children and adolescents with an immigrant background

22. Reference is made to chapter VIII with regard to the objectives and principles of Norway's immigration policy. In that chapter, we also discuss measures to ensure that children from minority and indigenous groups (the Sami) have the right to enjoy their own language, culture and religion.

23. "Immigrant children and adolescents" are defined as the children of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. It is considered to be an especially important challenge to find ways to promote the integration of persons from other cultures into Norwegian society.

24. In 1991, there were 37,490 children and adolescents between the ages of 0 and 19 with foreign nationalities in Norway. This represents 3.4 per cent of all the children in Norway in this age group. Children from Asia, Africa and South America make up 50 per cent of this group, or 1.7 per cent of all persons under the age of 20. Of all the immigrant children, 5,012 came from Pakistan, 2,899 from Viet Nam, 2,237 from Turkey and 1,994 from Chile.

25. Of the total of approximately 4,500 persons in State reception centres for asylum seekers, over 1,500 are children and unaccompanied minors under the age of 18; thus, they represent just over 30 per cent of all asylum seekers.

26. As in many other countries, there is a large concentration of foreign nationals in the capital city. Of all the foreign nationals, 32 per cent live in Oslo (1991), and comprise 9.9 per cent of the population there. Of all the foreign language pupils in the primary and lower secondary school, 41 per cent

live in Oslo. This represents 21 per cent of the capital's pupils at the primary and lower secondary level (3.7 per cent on a national basis), and encompasses 75 different languages.

27. The Ministry of Local Government and Labour is responsible for coordinating immigrant policies, including policies for immigrant children and adolescents. It is the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs that is responsible for coordinating policies for children in general. With regard to immigrant children, these two ministries have cooperated on the development of measures and policies. The Ministry of Local Government and Labour is primarily responsible for general conditions at State reception centres for asylum seekers, including conditions for children and adolescents.

28. An important part of the efforts to improve the living conditions of immigrants involves combating fear of foreigners, racism and ethnic discrimination. In May 1992, the Ministry of Local Government and Labour presented a plan of action against racism and ethnic discrimination. The most important measures in this connection are:

(a) Better support for victims of racist violence and harassment;

(b) Prompter reactions against persons who commit such acts;

(c) Raising the level of awareness of racist harassment as a social issue,

(d) Improved coordination of the collection of data and the development of methods for measuring structured ethnic discrimination.

In addition, the Government has taken the initiative to launch a youth campaign against xenophobia and racism. The campaign started in the spring of 1993.

29. There are many publicly financed measures that are indirectly aimed at immigrant children, for example, information to parents in numerous languages pertaining to pregnancy, childbirth, nutrition, education, etc. In addition, the municipalities offer public interpreting services to parents and children. Government support is available for mother tongue language instruction, instruction in Norwegian, and for making teaching and education more readily accessible to foreign-language pupils at the preschool, primary school, and lower and upper secondary school level.

30. An attempt has been made to safeguard the special conditions and needs associated with unaccompanied minors seeking asylum and refugees without parents through a special plan of action for receiving and settling this group.

31. Even though a great deal of information pertaining to immigrants in Norway has been gathered, there still is a pressing need for more information and research in connection with immigrants in Norwegian society. The Government places a great deal of emphasis on this through such measures as research grants. Two research programmes were started in 1991/92, which will last until 1996. These are the Programme for International Migration and

Ethnic Relations and the Programme for Immigrant Research. The latter programme gives priority to research on children and adolescents with an immigrant background.

32. Immigrant children and adolescents enjoy the same rights to primary and secondary school as Norwegians. The right to a three-year upper secondary education for all adolescents between the ages of 16 and 19 will apply as of 1994; this also includes a statutory follow-up in all counties (see chapter VII). This right will be of great importance for young immigrants' opportunity to be admitted to and complete an upper secondary education. The Government's objective is to strengthen the education of immigrant children so that the right to an upper secondary education will be a realistic opportunity for them. However, an important prerequisite is a good knowledge of Norwegian. This can also be accomplished through better integration between Norwegian children and immigrant children in recreational activities, and by participation in extracurricular activities and nursery schools, which are also important priority areas for the Government. In the recreational area, the authorities support various local projects that affect immigrant adolescents, and support voluntary children and youth organizations that actively work to recruit immigrants.

33. Another important area is the development of competence within the public assistance apparatus, especially within the child welfare services, in order to provide satisfactory service to immigrant children and their families.

D. The Commissioner for Children

34. The establishment of the Office of Commissioner for Children was an important event in connection with policies related to children. In Norway, the term "ombudsman" or "ombud" is usually reserved for national ombudsman offices. Such offices exist within the field of public administration, equal status issues, consumer affairs and children's issues. The ombudsman offices are established by the Storting and financed by the central Government. Their spheres of responsibility are stipulated in the individual acts pertaining to the respective offices. With the exception of revocation or amendment of these acts, the Storting may not issue instructions to the ombudsmen. They are therefore quite independent of the administration, and they have the right to criticize the Storting and the Government, should they believe this to be necessary.

35. With the exception of the Commissioner for Children, the ombudsmen are responsible for specific areas of Norwegian law. The position of the Commissioner for Children is rather different from that of the other ombudsmen. The Commissioner for Children does not deal with complaints related to specific areas of law, but serves as a spokesman for children's concerns in most aspects of society. The role of the children's ombudsman as a spokesman, and as the person responsible for safeguarding the rights of children, applies to all areas of Norwegian legislation that affect children.

36. The Office of Commissioner for Children was established in 1981 and was the first such office in the world. The Office was established in order to promote the interests of children in relation to public and private authorities, and to follow up the development of the conditions under which children grow up, pursuant to section 3 of the Act relating to the

Commissioner for Children. This Act was proposed by the Harlem Brundtland Government at the end of 1980. The main points of the Act and Regulations relating to the Commissioner for Children are as follows:

(a) The Commissioner shall be an independent spokesman for children in Norway;

(b) The Commissioner has a general mandate to observe and make efforts to improve the living conditions for children between the ages of 0 and 17;

(c) The Commissioner has the right to make his own professional priorities and determine how issues are to be dealt with;

(d) The Commissioner has the right of access to all documents in all matters affecting children that are dealt with by the public authorities. He also has the right of access to all children's institutions.

37. The Act has given the Commissioner for Children the freedom of action necessary for his or her position. The Office of the Commissioner for Children is under the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. The Office's budget is used entirely for wages and administration. The Commissioner for Children does not have any funds to allocate to measures for children. At present the staff comprises 11 persons. They cover the fields of law, sociology, education, child welfare, medicine, culture and information.

38. The only areas that are not the concern of the Commissioner are individual family conflicts and matters that are the subject of legal proceedings. The Commissioner for Children must therefore consider all areas of society, make people aware of any developments that are harmful to children, and propose changes in order to improve the situation of children. The Commissioner must be alert to the consequences and implications of all areas of Norwegian legislation and regulations which may affect children. The Commissioner for Children has no powers of decision, nor does he or she have the right to rescind the decisions of other authorities. In consequence, the main instruments at the disposal of the Commissioner are information, acting as spokesman for children, and issuing well-documented statements.

39. There has been a considerable increase in the number of inquiries addressed to the Commissioner for Children since the Office was established in 1981. During the 11 years the Office of Commissioner for Children has been in existence, the number of inquiries from children has increased from 200 per year to between 2,000 and 3,000 per year in more recent years. Most of these children are between the ages of 10 and 14, and there are more girls than boys in the group.

40. The particular increase in recent years is probably due to the "Klar melding" (Straight Talk) television programme broadcast by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. In this programme, all children under the age of 18 may call the Commissioner's telephone answering service free of charge and ask questions or present any type of problem they wish to the Commissioner. Many of these calls are recorded and answered in the Commissioner's weekly television programme.

41. More details about the Office may be found in the report "Ombudsman for Children. A Norwegian Summary After Eleven Years", a Report to the Council of Europe by Trond Viggo Torgersen, Commissioner for Children of Norway.

E. Contact line for children and adolescents

42. In order to assist children who need an adult to talk to, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Save the Children Fund established the Contact Line for Children and Adolescents. This line also makes it easier for adolescents to get in touch with the public assistance apparatus, regardless of where in the country they live. The contact line was established as a trial project in 1984. Experience with the line showed that there was a need for such a service. This programme has been constantly expanded, and as of 1993 the line is nationwide, open 24 hours a day, and free.

43. In 1992, the contact line received over 11,000 calls from children. Three per cent of these calls were from children who suffered from abuse or ill-treatment. Most of those who called were in need of contact with an adult. Many of the callers wanted to talk about sexuality or love problems.

44. The staff of the contact line consider it important that each child be given the opportunity to say what is on his mind. The children's requests for anonymity are respected, and the staff attempt to give them information and advice without pressuring them to accept a certain solution.

45. The contact line is one of several channels available to the public authorities for information on the situation of children in Norway. The programme receives financial support from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

F. Measures to increase awareness among adults and children of the principles and provisions of the Convention

46. Norway's objective is to ensure that the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are made known to and understood by the general population. This requires a concentrated effort over time, and cooperation between government agencies and voluntary organizations. It also requires that many different tools be used in relation to both children and adults.

47. Pursuant to article 42, not only the text of the Convention, but also the underlying principles must be made known to the children and adults. This means that adults, and particularly children, must acquire a deeper, broader understanding of the Convention. Adults will understand their rights to a greater extent than children. Children, on the other hand, must be taught their rights in a more basic way: which rights we are talking about, how they can achieve and uphold their rights, and why it is important to have such rights.

48. Children are the most important target group for this information. They must know their rights and be taught how to use them. Educational programmes for use in schools and by voluntary organizations are important tools. In addition, various media such as the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation's television station, and national and local radio stations, in addition to

various children's and youth magazines, are of great significance as channels to spread information. The aforementioned Commissioner for Children is very important with regard to making children aware of their rights.

49. In 1991, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs announced that it would provide funding for information measures, and many applications were received from non-governmental organizations and agencies. A total of approximately NOK 1.5 million (US$ 256,000) was allocated for various information projects.

50. In 1992, the Ministry continued its successful cooperation with various non-governmental organizations. The Ministry defined two main priority areas for 1992: the preparation of a commentary on the Convention, including an explanation of national legislation, and an educational programme for pupils in grades 6 to 9.

51. The Ministry is responsible for publishing the Convention in English, the two official Norwegian languages (two written languages: bokmål and nynorsk) and Sami. The nynorsk and Sami versions were published at the end of 1992. Funding has been provided for various short versions and posters relating to the Convention.

52. The Ministry has cooperated with and provided funding for numerous voluntary organizations that have produced information materials, educational programmes, books and magazines that present the Convention on the Rights of the Child to both children and adults. Seminars have been arranged for the staff of nursery schools and the national school system, for students at teachers' and social work colleges, and for politicians. In addition, a grant has been given for production of a television series to present and illustrate the Convention, to be broadcast by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation.

53. Together, these measures cover many of the most important target groups for information on the Convention. Information must, however, be spread on a continual basis. Both children and adults will need constant reminders of the substance of the Convention. In addition, there will always be new groups of children that will be in need of information. Therefore a long-term strategy has been planned to make the principles and provisions of the Convention known. The national school system, the media and voluntary organizations have important roles in this connection. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs will therefore still provide funding for disseminating such information.

54. The objective of our information strategy is to make the substance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child known to all children and adults in Norway in the course of the next three years. In addition, it shall be possible to use the Convention as a tool to improve the situation of children where they live. The Convention's principles will form the basis for public and private activities in areas that affect children.

55. Information initiatives in cooperation with voluntary organizations will continue to take place. This ensures both that the information is spread and that there is wide popular support for dissemination of information pertaining to the Convention.

G. Measures to make Norway's report widely available

56. A large number of copies of Norway's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child will be printed. The report will be made known through voluntary organizations and distributed to public agencies that work in areas that are affected by the Convention, colleges that train personnel who work with children and adolescents, and all the municipalities in Norway.

II. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

A. The age of majority

57. According to section 1 of the Norwegian Guardianship Act of 22 April 1927 No. 3, a person is a minor when he is under the age of 18.

B. Schooling and education

58. Nine years of schooling are compulsory for (all) children. Schooling generally begins the year they attain the age of 7 and ends at the age of 15 (cf. sections 2 and 13 of Act No. 24 of 13 June 1969 relating to Primary and Lower Secondary Education). As from 1997, children will start school the year they attain 6 years of age. The Government also aims at 10 years of compulsory schooling.

59. Upper secondary education is not compulsory, but, starting in the 1994/95 school year, adolescents (aged 16 to 19) will, after completing their (compulsory) primary and lower secondary education, have the right to three years of upper secondary education qualifying them for a trade or higher education. (Reference is also made to chapter VII).

C. Paid work

60. Section 34 of the Working Environment Act of 4 February 1977 No. 4 states that children under the age of 15 or children subject to compulsory schooling according to the Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act may not as a rule engage in paid work. There are exemptions to this rule and a general condition in this respect is that the work must not adversely affect the health, development or schooling of the child in question.

61. Starting at 15 years of age, the child may engage in ordinary paid (full-time) work and manage the money he has earned (cf. sections 32 and 33 of the Guardianship Act). The guardian may, however, repudiate such a work agreement if necessary due to the welfare or the upbringing of the child.

62. The Working Environment Act also contains provisions regarding working hours for employees under the age of 18. Regulations laid down pursuant to the Act contain provisions concerning hazardous work for such employees.

D. The child's right to be heard and right to progressive self-determination

63. According to section 31 of Act No. 7 of 8 April 1981 relating to Children and Parents (Children's Act), as the child gradually develops and matures, the parents shall hear the child's opinion before making decisions on personal

matters affecting the child. When the child has attained the age of 12, he shall be allowed to state his opinion before decisions are made on personal matters on his behalf, including with which of his parents he wishes to live. Considerable weight shall be given to the child's wishes.

64. Children who have attained 15 years of age shall themselves decide the question of choice of education and of applying for membership in or resigning from organizations (cf. section 32 of the Children's Act).

65. Parents shall give the child increasingly greater rights to make his own decisions as he gets older and until he comes of age (cf. section 33 of the Children's Act).

66. Section 6 of Act No. 8 of 28 February 1986 relating to Adoption stipulates that children who have attained 12 years of age may not be adopted without their own consent. Adopted children may, from the day they attain 18 years of age, demand information about their biological parents from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs or the County Governor who has consented to the adoption in question (cf. section 12 of the Act).

67. According to section 18 of the Act relating to Personal Names, the consent of a child older than 12 years is usually necessary in order to change his name.

68. According to section 6-3 of Act No. 100 of 17 July 1992 relating to Child Welfare Services, the child shall be informed and his advice sought in child welfare cases under the Act, when it is reasonable to do so considering his development, maturity and the kind of matter in question. If the child is 12 years or older, he must always be given the opportunity to express an opinion before a decision is made with regard to placing the child in question in a foster home, institution or with regard to a subsequent move. Due consideration shall be paid to the child's opinion.

69. In child welfare cases, the child may claim his own party rights from the date he attains 15 years of age on condition that the child in question understands what the case involves. In special circumstances, the county welfare board may also grant party rights to children under 15 years of age. In cases involving measures for children with behavioural problems, the child shall always be considered a party, regardless of his age.

70. All children must have a legal guardian who as a general rule manages the minor's finances (cf. section 38 of the Guardian Act). If the child does not have any parents, or for other reasons does not have anyone with parental responsibility, the Office of the Public Guardian appoints a legal guardian (cf. section 3 of the Guardian Act). If the minor is older than 14 years, the legal guardian must listen to what the minor has to say before a decision is made (cf. section 40 of the Act).

71. If a minor older than 14 years is a party to a case concerning the public administration, and is represented by his parents or legal guardian, he must be notified and given the opportunity to express his opinion before any decisions are made by a public body in the case in question (cf. section 16 of the Public Administration Act of 10 February 1967).

E. Medical questions

72. All preschool-aged children are entitled to free examinations at a municipal health centre, a vaccination programme and medical check-ups at certain ages (cf. the regulations laid down pursuant to the Municipal Health Services Act of 19 November 1982 No. 66). When the child is in primary and lower secondary school, school health services take over the responsibility for medical check-ups and vaccinations (cf. the regulations laid down pursuant to the above-mentioned Act).

73. Doctors shall provide information about the condition, illness and treatment to their patients aged 12 years or older (cf. section 26 of the Medical Practitioners' Act of 13 June 1980 No. 42). Children between 12 and 16 years of age may request the doctor not to give specific information to their parents. Such a request will be complied with if the doctor finds that the child's wishes should be respected. The child's degree of maturity is a factor in this evaluation.

74. According to section 2 of Act No. 50 of 13 June 1975 relating to the termination of pregnancy, a pregnant woman has the right to an abortion on condition that the operation is performed before the twelfth week of the pregnancy. If the pregnant woman is under 16 years of age, the person(s) with parental responsibility or the guardian shall be given the opportunity to state their opinion unless there are special circumstances that make this inadvisable (cf. section 4 of the Act). If the person(s) with parental responsibility or the guardian(s) is/are against an abortion in such cases, an abortion may only be performed on condition that the county medical officer gives his consent (cf. section 9 of the Act).

F. The obligation to give evidence

75. There is no age limit connected to the obligation to give evidence in criminal cases. Nevertheless, section 128 of Act No. 25 of 22 May 1981 relating to Legal Procedure in Criminal Cases (the Criminal Procedure Act) stipulates that when a child under 16 years of age is examined as a witness, the child's parents or person(s) responsible for the child should be allowed to be present at the examination unless the person concerned has been reported in connection with the case or there are other reasons to the contrary. In addition, there are several special procedural rules in connection with the examination of children in cases of immoral conduct. Whenever possible, such statements should be recorded by a video or tape recorder.

76. In the event that a child under the age of 10 years is called as a witness in a civil case, the court decides, based on a careful assessment between consideration for the witness and the value of such information to the case, whether such a statement should be taken (cf. section 210 of the Civil Procedure Act of 13 August 1915 No. 6). If a child is called as a witness, and there are reasons to exempt the child in question from the duty to testify, due, for example, to kinship with one of the parties, the main rule is that the child himself (not the guardian) decides whether he wishes to give a statement.

G. Driving licences

77. A licence to drive a small motorcycle, snow scooter or tractor may be obtained as from 16 years of age (cf. the regulations laid down pursuant to the Road Traffic Act of 18 June 1965 No. 4 (driving licence regulations)). A driving licence for a private car may not be obtained until the person has attained 18 years of age (cf. the above-mentioned regulations).

H. Passports

78. Children under 16 years of age may have their own passport or be entered in their parents' passports. As from 16 years of age the child must have a passport of his own. Passports are, however, not issued to children under the age of 18 years without the permission of their parents, legal guardian or any other person responsible for the care of the child in place of its parents.

I. Age of criminal liability

79. According to section 46 of the General Civil Penal Code of 22 May 1902 No. 10, no person may be punished for any criminal act committed before attaining 15 years of age. (Reference is also made to chapter VIII).

J. Legal age of sexual consent

80. The legal age of sexual consent in Norway is 16 years of age. (Reference is also made to chapter VIII).

K. Legal age of marriage

81. A child under 18 years of age may not marry without the permission of the person(s) who has/have the parental responsibility and the County Governor.

L. The right to vote

82. A person has the right to vote in national, municipal and county elections and has the right and obligation to stand for and accept election from the year he attains 18 years of age (cf. arts. 50 and 63 of the Constitution and section 3 of the Election Act).

M. Compulsory and voluntary military service

83. According to the Military Service Act of 17 July 1953 No. 29, a man is liable for military service from 1 January of the year he attains 19 years of age. Exceptions are made, particularly in connection with military colleges. Adolescents may be admitted to technical military colleges when they attain the age of 17 and to officer training colleges when they attain the age of 18. Their compulsory military service starts upon admission to a school. In the event of war, the King may decide that men shall be liable for military service from 1 January of the year in which they attain 17 years of age. However, the older age groups are called up first.

84. Women may apply for acceptance into military service. They may do military service on a voluntary basis from the year they attain 19 years of

age. Women have the same rights and obligations while doing their voluntary military service as men have while doing their compulsory military service.

85. Children of both sexes may be enlisted as volunteers by the Home Guard from 16 years of age (cf. the Home Guard Act). The Home Guard is part of Norway's military defence forces. However, adolescents in the Home Guard must not be made available for mobilization or be given mobilization assignments before they have completed their initial compulsory military service.

N. Films

86. There are restrictions as to what commercially shown films and videos children are allowed to see. The National Board of Film Censors determines which films may be shown to children aged 5 years or older, 10 years or older, 15 years or older and 18 years or older. Films approved for children who are 5 years or older may be seen by children younger than 5 years when accompanied by the person(s) responsible for the child or another responsible person. Children aged 5 or above may see films approved for the age group 10 years or older when accompanied by the above-mentioned person(s). There are no corresponding rules for films approved for the age group 15 years or older or 18 years or older. The above-mentioned provisions are laid down in Act No. 21 of 15 May 1987 relating to Film and Videograms.

O. Sale of restricted goods

87. The sale of tobacco products - or imitations that may promote the use of such products - to persons under 16 years of age is prohibited by law.

88. The sale and serving of spirits to persons under 20 years of age is not permitted. The sale or serving of other kinds of alcoholic beverages is forbidden to persons under 18 years of age. These provisions are laid down in the Act relating to the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages. (Reference is also made to chapter VIII).

89. Medicinal goods are only sold in pharmacies. All medicinal goods shall be labelled "store out of the reach of children". There are no special provisions concerning age limits in connection with the sale of medicinal goods in pharmacies. The Directorate of Health's regulations of 1986 relating to requisition and delivery of medicinal goods from pharmacies state that medicinal goods and other goods that can be abused must not be dispensed when it is probable that they will be abused.

90. According to sections 22 and 43 of Act No. 5 of 20 June relating to Medicinal Goods, the possession and use of narcotics is prohibited and punishable by fines or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or both.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)

91. The Child Welfare Act applies to all children residing in Norway. The Act is based upon what is known as the principle of domicile, which means that

all foreigners residing in Norway have the right to the same services and benefits under the Child Welfare Act as Norwegian nationals. (Reference is also made to chapter V.)

92. Although it is not stated in the Children's Act itself, the Act is interpreted and applied on a completely non-discriminatory basis in accordance with the principle set out in article 2 of the Convention. One of the main objectives of the Children's Act is to confirm full legal equality between children born in and out of wedlock, and to guarantee the parents equal rights regardless of their marital status.

93. The following are some legislative provisions and other legal rules which prohibit discrimination in certain areas in accordance with the criteria stated in article 2 of the Convention. These provisions and regulations also apply to children:

(a) A general rule which applies to the entire public administration prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, political views, etc;

(b) It is prohibited to discriminate against any person on the basis of religion, race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation, by refusing such a person goods or services or access to a public performance or exhibition or other public gathering, on the same conditions as apply to others (cf. section 349a of the Penal Code). Any offender or person who is accessory to such an act is liable to fines or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months;

(c) According to section 135a of the Penal Code, any person shall be liable to fines or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years who by any communication made publicly or otherwise disseminated among the public threatens, insults or subjects to hatred, persecution or contempt any person or group of persons because of their religion, creed, race, skin colour, or national or ethnic origin or homosexual bent, life-style, or inclination. The same applies to any person who is accessory to any such act;

(d) According to section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1988, foreign nationals have during their stay in Norway the same rights and obligations as Norwegian nationals, unless otherwise provided by legislation currently in force;

(e) According to section 3 of the Act relating to Equality Between the Sexes of 1978, discrimination between the sexes is not permitted. However, this Act does not prohibit differential treatment which promotes sexual equality in accordance with the purpose of the Act. Nor does it prevent women from being given special rights due to existing inequalities between men and women. According to section 2 of the Act, this is applicable in all areas with the exception of the internal affairs of religious communities.

B. The best interests of the child (art. 3)

94. The Children's Act provides that all decisions concerning parental responsibility, daily care and visitation rights shall always be made on the basis of the best interests of the child. It also stipulates that the child's

opinion shall be taken into consideration when decisions affecting the child are made. The best interests of the child must be the primary consideration and take precedence over any other interests, such as the interests of the parents. (Reference is also made to chapter V for a definition of parental responsibility and to paras. 63-71 for a description of how the child's right to be heard and to make his own decisions increases as he gets older).

95. The main purpose of the Child Welfare Act is to ensure that children and adolescents who live under conditions that may be detrimental to their health and development receive the right assistance and care at the right time (cf. section 1-1 of the Act). The Act stresses that decisive emphasis shall be placed on the child's best interests in the choice of which measures are to be implemented pursuant to the Act. Only factors of significance to the child shall be taken into consideration in such an evaluation, and there should be no emphasis on the wishes of the parents in the event of a conflict between the interests of the parents and those of the child. The Act also stresses that, in this connection, it is important to ensure that the individual child has a good, stable relationship with adults and continuous care.

96. It is not the responsibility of the child welfare services to look after a child in order to protect society. The purpose of the implemented measures shall not be punishment; the measures must address the causes of the criminal or anti-social behaviour.

97. The question of ensuring the protection and care necessary for the child's well-being (art. 32) in chapters V and VI below).

98. The legal protection of children and adolescents in institutions is guaranteed by a general provision laid down in section 5-9 of the Child Welfare Act. The Act also authorizes the issuing of further regulations.

99. Institutions shall be run in such a way that children can decide for themselves on personal matters and have whatever contact they want with other people, as long as this is commensurate with the child's age and maturity, the purpose of the stay, and the institution's responsibility for its operations, including its responsibility for security and welfare.

100. The child shall have the right to move about freely both inside and outside the institution grounds, with such limitations as are imposed for the purpose of ensuring the child's safety and welfare. In the case of children who are placed in an institution due to serious behavioural problems of a lasting nature, or who have consented to detention in an institution, the institution may limit the child's possibilities for leaving the area to the extent necessary according to the intention of the decision.

101. Certain violations of personal integrity are expressly prohibited. The first example is the prohibition against physical reprimand. There is also a general prohibition against solitary confinement or similar measures, unless it is permitted according to regulations given pursuant to this section. According to these regulations such measures are only permitted in cases of imminent danger, for example to prevent a child from harming itself or other persons. The provisions of section 5-9 of the Act also include a prohibition against checking a resident's correspondence. However, further regulations

containing exceptions to this rule have been laid down pursuant to the section in order to prevent narcotics or dangerous weapons from being brought into the premises of the institution.

102. It is an underlying basic requirement in the Child Welfare Act that institutions for children are of a sufficiently high standard. In this connection it is important to take into consideration the need for flexibility and local conditions. The operation of the institutions is subject to supervision by the county governor, and if the institution is not operated in a proper manner, the governor may issue an order to take remedial measures or to close the institution down.

103. The new Act also contains a provision in section 2-1 making the municipality responsible for the necessary training of child welfare staff. The staff are obliged to participate in the training that is prescribed and regarded as necessary in order to maintain their professional standards.

104. In addition, institutions established according to other legislation are often used as alternative locations for children in the care of the child welfare authorities. These institutions include psychiatric institutions for children and adolescents, special schools, various living arrangements in connection with programmes for the mentally handicapped, and various types of communes which offer treatment, residence and employment. These institutions are not child welfare institutions according to the Child Welfare Act, but constitute an important instrument for the child welfare services.

C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)

105. All legislation in Norway related to children and all child welfare programmes, health services, etc. are based on the recognition of the principle that every child born has an inherent right to life and that, if the parents are not able to do so, the authorities are responsible for ensuring to the greatest extent possible that the child survives and grows up. Pregnant women are entitled to have an abortion until the twelfth week of pregnancy.

106. Neglect of a child is one of the factors that can lead to the child being committed to the care of the child welfare service (see chapter V).

107. The penal provisions with regard to violation of the right to life are as described in the following paragraphs.

108. Crimes against life and limb are subject to a penalty pursuant to various provisions of the Penal Code. The penalty for any person intentionally causing the death of another person, or for anyone accessory to such a death, is imprisonment for a minimum of six years. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for 15 years, but in aggravating circumstances a person may be sentenced to 21 years of imprisonment.

109. The murder of a child committed by the mother during birth or within one day after the birth carries a less severe prison sentence of a term of one to eight years (cf. section 234 of the Penal Code). Under especially aggravating circumstances, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 years may be imposed.

110. The penalty for intentionally causing bodily harm resulting in death is imprisonment for a term of up to eight years (cf. section 229 of the Penal Code). Intentional assault resulting in death is punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years (cf. section 228 of the Penal Code).

111. According to section 30 of the Children's Act, corporal punishment is not permitted in connection with bringing up children.

112. Any person who negligently causes the death of another person, including by the use of a motor vehicle, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or under especially aggravating circumstances for a term not exceeding six years (cf. section 239).

113. Reference is made to chapter VI of this report with regard to preventive measures and other measures associated with article 6.2 relating to the responsibility for ensuring that the child survives and grows up.

D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)

114. A child may be a party to a civil case. Civil actions against minors are filed against the guardian and actions on behalf of minors are filed by the guardian. These provisions are laid down in section 37 of the Civil Procedure Act. Children older than 16 years shall be summoned to court hearings and receive copies of the written pleadings at the same time as the guardian (cf. section 37 of the Act).

115. Although a minor may not normally conduct legal proceedings himself, he may testify as a party to the case at the request of the court or the parties' legal representatives.

116. The minor shall also be represented by the guardian, or a representative appointed by the guardian in cases decided by the public administration. The minor thus has the right to be notified through his representative and to express his views in the same way as other parties. If the minor is over 14 years of age, he shall also be notified directly and be given the opportunity to express his views himself (cf. section 16 of the Public Administration Act). The child's rights in connection with child welfare cases are mentioned in paragraphs 68 and 69.

117. The Planning and Building Act regulates planning and resource management. The main purpose of the Act is to coordinate the activities of the central Government, the county authorities and the municipalities, and to provide a basis for decisions related to the use and conservation of resources and development projects. Section 2 of the Act emphasizes that it is essential in connection with planning to ensure that children grow up under good conditions.

118. The Act was amended in 1989 in order among other things to strengthen the interests of children in the planning process. Pursuant to section 10-2 of the Act, all municipal councils shall appoint a chief municipal officer or other municipal officer who shall attend the meetings of the municipal building board with the right to speak and submit proposals, particularly in

order to safeguard the interests of children and adolescents. However, the municipal building board is free to decide whether or not to consider the practical aspects of such a proposal.

119. The Planning and Building Act contains provisions concerning consequence analyses in connection with major development projects. The purpose of these analyses is to ensure that the effects on the environment, natural resources and the community are analysed and evaluated before a decision on a planning permit is made.

120. In 1989, the Government adopted national policy guidelines pursuant to the Planning and Building Act, entitled "National Policy Guidelines to Safeguard the Interests of Children and Adolescents in Planning". According to the guidelines municipalities shall organize their planning process in such a way that the views of children as affected parties are expressed and so that various groups of children and adolescents are given the opportunity to participate. According to the national policy guidelines, the municipalities shall appoint a body to follow up these guidelines.

121. The National Policy Guidelines lay down overriding objectives concerning the environment in which children grow up, but they also provide a framework for planning and development issues pursuant to the Planning and Building Act. This is discussed in more detail in chapter VII.

122. The arrangement concerning the municipal officer does not function satisfactorily in all the municipalities. The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs will follow up the implementation of the National Policy Guidelines in the municipalities.

IV. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Name and nationality (art. 7)

123. The right to Norwegian nationality is based on the principle of descent (cf. section 1 of the Nationality Act of 1950). The nationality of the child therefore depends on the nationality of his parents. The Nationality Act is also based on the principle of equality, which means that a married woman has the same rights as her husband with respect to nationality. The husband, the wife and the child may therefore be nationals of different countries. The Act differentiates between children born in and out of wedlock. A child may have dual nationality, but it may also be stateless.

124. If the mother is a Norwegian national, or the father is Norwegian and the parents are married, the child will automatically acquire Norwegian nationality. If a Norwegian man and a foreign woman have a common child before they are married to each other, the child will acquire Norwegian nationality when the parents marry, provided that the child is not married and under the age of 18 (section 2). If the parents are not married and only the father is a Norwegian national, then the child must apply for Norwegian nationality. If the parents do not apply for Norwegian nationality, the child will be stateless, unless the child automatically acquires the nationality of his mother. This depends on the rules that apply in the country of which the

mother is a national. A foreigner older than 18 years of age who has lived in Norway for a certain number of years may on further conditions laid down in sections 3 and 6 of the Act be granted Norwegian citizenship.

125. Section 1 of the Children's Act reads as follows:

> "When a child is born the doctor or midwife shall report the birth to the National Population Register. The report shall contain information as to the identity of the father of the child (...) or of the man whom the mother has alleged to be the father of the child in the event that paternity has not yet been established (...) When the child is born without a doctor or a midwife being present, the mother shall herself report the birth to the National Population Register within one month. (...) In cases where paternity has not yet been established or where the parents do not live together, the birth report shall be sent both to the National Population Register and to the Maintenance Enforcement Officer."

126. The Act relating to Personal Names of 1964 contains provisions to ensure the child's right to a name. The child will normally have the same surname as the parents. If the parents have the same surname, the child will be given that name. If the parents do not have the same surname, the persons with parental responsibility can choose whether the child shall be given the surname of the mother or the father. The surname must be reported to the National Population Register by the time the child attains six months of age. The child will be given the mother's name unless otherwise determined. The persons with parental responsibility shall also notify the National Population Register of the child's first name by the time the child attains six months of age. If the child is christened, the person who christens the child is obliged to submit such a notification. Violation of the obligation to notify is punishable by a fine, pursuant to the Penal Code. The Act lays down certain rules which limit the free choice of names. It is, among other things, prohibited to use a name which may be a disadvantage to the child.

127. The child's opportunity to know his parents depends on whether the identity of the father has been determined. Pursuant to section 3 of the Children's Act, the father of the child is presumed to be the man to whom the mother is married at the time of birth. If the mother is a widow, her husband is presumed to be the father if she could have possibly conceived the child before he died. When the parents are not married to each other, the father may acknowledge paternity during the pregnancy or after the child is born, pursuant to section 4 of the Children's Act. Acknowledgement pursuant to section 4 shall only be effective if the mother has accepted it in writing, or when the acknowledgement is made by the man whom the mother has alleged to be the father. If the paternity is not established in accordance with the provisions laid down in section 3 or 4, i.e. through marriage or acknowledgement, the authorities are responsible for establishing paternity according to section 5 of the Children's Act.

128. The Children's Act contains detailed procedural rules concerning how a paternity case is to be dealt with at the administrative level (the maintenance enforcement officer and the county governor) and by the courts. In paternity cases, the child, the mother and any man alleged to be, or who may be the father, are parties to the case and have the right to institute legal proceedings. If information is revealed which indicates that another

man may be the father, the court shall make him a respondent. The county governor and the courts may require a blood test from the child, the mother and any man who can be assumed to be the father of the child. Should any of the parties refuse to comply with such an order, the court may impose a coercive fine for every day that passes until the order is complied with. As of 1 October 1992, all blood tests taken in paternity cases will be subject to DNA analysis.

129. The conditions for pronouncing judgement in paternity cases are laid down in section 9 of the Children's Act:

(a) "If a man has had sexual intercourse with the mother during the period when conception could have taken place, he shall be adjudged to be the father, unless there is little probability that he is the father";

(b) "If the mother has had sexual intercourse with several men during the period in which she can have conceived the child, judgement on paternity shall nevertheless only be pronounced when there is a substantial probability that one specific person is the father rather than any of the others";

(c) If the mother has undergone artificial insemination, and the husband has consented to the insemination "... he shall be adjudged to be the father, unless there is little probability that the child was conceived at the time of insemination". The sperm donor may not be adjudged to be the father. This does not apply, however, if the insemination was performed using the sperm of the husband and it is probable that the child was conceived at the time of the insemination.

130. Pursuant to section 10 of the Act relating to Artificial Insemination, health personnel are obliged to ensure that the identity of the donor remains a secret. A child conceived by means of artificial insemination (with sperm from a man other than the mother's husband) has therefore no opportunity to discover the identity of his biological father. The child's right to know the identity of his parents pursuant to article 7.1 of the Convention applies only "as far as possible". Norway does not regard article 7.1 as any hindrance to continuing its present practice of upholding the anonymity of the donor.

B. Preservation of identity (art. 8)

131. The child's right to preserve his identity is not explicitly stated in Norwegian legislation, but it is assumed to be a self-evident right. A child's name may be changed upon application by the parents when the child is under the age of 18, but the child's consent is necessary if he is older than 12 years of age (cf. section 18 of the Act relating to Personal Names). Citizenship may not be taken away from the child. The child may refuse adoption when he has attained 12 years of age.

132. The child's right to preserve his family relations is limited by the child welfare legislation (see chapter V). Due to consideration for the child's best interests, he may be committed to the care of the public authorities if he has been subjected to ill-treatment or neglect.

133. The child's right to preserve his identity may be affected by alterations of paternity. When paternity is established due to the fact that the mother

is married, either of the parents may institute paternity proceedings until the child attains the age of three. Exceptions to the three-year time-limit may be made if special grounds so indicate (cf. section 6 of the Children's Act).

134. If paternity is established on the basis of acknowledgement, either parent may institute paternity proceedings when new information concerning paternity or information indicating that the acknowledgement cannot be considered binding is submitted (cf. section 6). The proceedings must be instituted within three months after the person in question became acquainted with the information. Exceptions to the three-month time-limit may be made if special grounds so indicate.

135. Paternity may also be altered when another man acknowledges paternity, pursuant to section 4 of the Children's Act. This acknowledgement must be accepted in writing by the mother and the man who has been assumed to be the father. Such an acknowledgement is only valid if the county governor considers it to be probable that the other man is the father of the child. Along with the parents' time-limits for contesting paternity, this must be considered to be a means of preserving the child's identity. Moreover, the child may bring a suit before the courts at any time, regardless of the time-limits.

136. A final judgement of paternity may only be altered by means of a petition for resumption pursuant to the Civil Procedure Act.

C. Freedom of expression (art. 13)

137. The child's right to independent freedom of speech, etc. is encompassed by sections 31, 32 and 33 of the Children's Act.

138. Freedom of expression is a constitutional right in Norway, limited only by certain legal restrictions considered necessary in a democratic society. This right applies to all citizens, regardless of age. The Commissioner for Children has received some inquiries about such matters as censorship of school newspapers, but judging by the number of inquiries, this is a minor problem.

139. Below is a summary of the most important restrictions on freedom of expression:

(a) According to section 135a of the Penal Code, any person who makes, publicly or otherwise, statements considered discriminatory or disseminates such opinions among the public, shall be liable to fines or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year;

(b) It is a punishable offence to make defamatory statements, i.e. statements that violate the integrity of another person or are likely to damage another person's good name and reputation, etc. (cf. sections 246 and 247 of the Penal Code). Pursuant to section 142 of the Penal Code, it is prohibited to publicly scorn or offend another person's religious beliefs;

(c) The advertising of alcohol and tobacco is prohibited, and there are special regulations governing the advertising of pharmaceutical products

(cf. section 29 of the Pharmaceuticals Act of 1964, the Act relating to Protection Against the Harmful Effects of Tobacco of 1973 and the Act relating to the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages of 1989). There is also a general prohibition against sexually discriminatory or misleading marketing (cf. sections 1 and 2 of the Act relating to the Control of Marketing and Conditions of Contract of 1972);

(d) Section 211 of the Penal Code prohibits public lectures or performances or exhibitions of an indecent or pornographic nature. The publishing, sale, hire or other dissemination of indecent or pornographic writings, pictures, films, videotapes, etc. are prohibited. Pursuant to section 382 of the Penal Code, it is also prohibited to publish, sell or rent films or videotapes in which improper use is made of scenes of gross violence for entertainment purposes. The same applies to television broadcasts;

(e) Films or videotapes may not be shown or sold without a licence from the authorities. In addition, all films and videotapes that are to be shown for commercial purposes must have the prior approval of the National Board of Film Censors (cf. the Act Relating to Films and Videogrammes of 1987).

140. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation has for many years used children and adolescents as co-hosts for a great many radio and television programmes for children and young people.

D. Access to appropriate information (art. 17)

141. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) is, through its programmes for children and adolescents, the most important mass medium with regard to attaining the objective set out in article 17 (a) and (b); this task is given high priority. Programmes for children and adolescents are well-prepared, comprehensive, informative and portray cultural diversity. (Reference is also made to the media in chapter VII). The Commissioner for Children (see chapter I) broadcasts his own programmes on NRK. These programmes provide information on children's rights, and questions put forward by children and adolescents are answered.

142. With regard to article 17 (c), reference is made to the paragraph about libraries and funds for the distribution of children's books in chapter VII.

143. Central government grants are available for library services for immigrants (cf. art. 17 (d)). Immigrants are among the most frequent users of Norwegian libraries. Public funds are also available for newspapers printed in the immigrants' native languages. When NRK expands the number of radio stations to three, there will also be more programmes especially for immigrants. The mother-tongue instruction offered in the schools to children from linguistic minorities is also important in relation to article 17 (c).

144. The Sami are an indigenous people with their own language. There are special broadcasts in the Sami language transmitted through the national network and locally. (Reference is made to chapter VIII with regard to education, culture and information programmes for the Sami.)

145. With regard to article 17 (e), reference is made to the restrictions on freedom of expression mentioned previously in relation to article 13. In

addition, the provisions concerning age restrictions in relation to viewing of films are of importance (see chapter II). The objective of these restrictions is to protect children and adolescents from powerful, detrimental influences.

146. The Marketing Act of 1972 protects against advertising which is unreasonable in relation to the consumer (section 1) or misleading (section 2). Due consideration shall be had for children and adolescents when commercials and advertisements are made, and as regards allowing children and adolescents to participate in these commercials and advertisements. The Broadcasting Act prohibits the transmission of commercials that are aimed specifically at children on Norwegian television.

147. In Norway, specific overall guidelines have not been drafted to protect children against information and materials that are injurious to their well-being. There is, however, broad political consensus that children should be protected against unfortunate influences. In the new Report to the Storting concerning Media Policy, to be presented by the Ministry of Culture in 1993, this subject will be mentioned in relation to several different contexts, for example, in connection with questions concerning children and advertising and the use of the mass media by children.

148. Most media take the question of being especially careful when covering children very seriously, but the Norwegian Press Council has dealt with several complaints involving children. The Council has often pointed out that special consideration must be taken when children are brought into the media spotlight. A new item was added to the press's "Be Careful" poster in 1987 concerning the need to protect children from being directly or indirectly recognized when child welfare or custody cases are covered: "Be careful not to expose the identity of the child when covering family disputes or cases dealt with by the child welfare services". The poster's general rule that one should be careful in respect of using as sources persons who are not able to understand the consequences of what they are saying, is especially important in relation to the use of children as sources.

E. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)

149. Article 2 of the Constitution lays down that all residents of Norway shall enjoy freedom of religion. Freedom of religion means a person's right to cultivate his own religion, form religious organizations, hold religious meetings and promote his faith among those who do not share the same beliefs. This provision is generally understood to mean that a person is also free to indulge in anti-religious activities, for example, organizations that are based on non-religious philosophies of life. However, such activities may not be carried out in such a manner that the beliefs of other persons are violated.

150. The right of freedom of religion is also laid down in section 1 of the Act relating to Religious Communities of 1969. Pursuant to section 3 of this Act, any person over 15 years of age may join or leave a religious community. In the case of younger children, the parents or legal guardians may decide which religious community the child shall belong to. When the child is 12 years old, he has the right to state his views in connection with joining or

leaving a religious community. Persons under the age of 20 may not vow to belong to a religious order for the rest of their lives, and it is prohibited to accept such a vow, if given.

151. Pursuant to article 2 of the Constitution, the Evangelical Lutheran religion is the official religion of the Norwegian State. Other religious communities or non-religious philosophical societies have, pursuant to the Act relating to Religious Communities of 1969 or the Act relating to Grants to non-religious Philosophical Societies of 1981, the right to central government grants that are approximately equivalent to the amount budgeted for the Church of Norway in the same year based upon the number of members. This is, for example, of significance to the practising of religion by immigrants who belong to religions other than the official religion of Norway.

152. Section 1 of the Act relating to Primary and Lower Secondary Education prescribes that education must be based on the Christian religion in accordance with the principle of an official State religion. Education programmes must include religious instruction in the Evangelical Lutheran tradition, but this instruction must also cover other religions and philosophies of life. Children whose parents do not belong to the Church of Norway shall be totally or partially exempt from instruction in the Christian religion if their parents so request. The Act does not stipulate any right to instruction in alternative religions or philosophies of life, but the individual schools are requested to offer such instruction.

153. The number of pupils in the primary and lower secondary schools who are exempt from Christian religious instruction has increased from 19,335 pupils in the 1989/90 school year to 26,533 in 1991/92 (i.e. almost 6 per cent of all pupils in the primary and lower secondary schools). The number of pupils who are offered instruction in alternative religions or philosophies of life has, however, not increased correspondingly; from 18,337 in 1989/90 to 21,838 in 1991/92. The percentage of those receiving alternative instruction in relation to those who were exempt from Christian religious instruction declined somewhat but is still quite high - 82.3 per cent in 1991.

F. Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (art. 15)

154. Freedom of association is not generally protected by the Constitution or any other Act. However, there are some limitations on freedom of association in section 330 of the Penal Code. According to this provision it is a punishable offence to participate in an association which is prohibited by law. However, there are no such prohibited associations at the present time. It is also a punishable offence to participate in an association whose purpose is to commit or encourage felonies. The same applies to associations which demand the unconditional obedience of their members.

155. With regard to labour legislation, it is a recognized principle that a worker has the right to join, or not to join, a trade union.

156. Neither is the freedom of peaceful assembly protected by the Constitution or other Acts. The second paragraph of article 99 of the Constitution provides a special, limited form of protection of freedom of assembly, since it states that the State may not use military force against citizens without legal authority, unless the assembly disturbs public order and does not

disperse after reasonable warning has been given. Pursuant to the Local Police Bylaws, the permission of the police is required in order to hold demonstrations, marches, open-air meetings, etc. in a public place. Such permission may only be refused when this is necessary in order to maintain public order or ensure the general flow of traffic. Instructions for exercising this authority are also given in the Police Instructions laid down by the Royal Decree of 22 June 1990 pursuant to the Police Act of 1936.

157. With regard to demonstrations, section 8-5 of the Police Instructions reads: "The police shall not prohibit demonstrations, other processions, meetings, gatherings, stands, etc., in public places unless there is reason to fear that they may give rise to violence or similar disturbance of the peace, public order or security, or unless the matter which is sought promoted, or the way it is done is in violation of the law."

158. When political demonstrations are to take place in Oslo, the capital of Norway, the police notify the road traffic authorities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the embassies which the procession will pass and, when deemed necessary, the embassy against which the demonstration is directed.

G. Protection of privacy (art. 16)

159. There are no general provisions in Norwegian law that protect the child from interference in his private life, family, home or correspondence, but these rights are protected by law in certain limited areas. However, there are to a certain extent non-statutory principles regarding the protection of privacy, as is evident from the practice of the Supreme Court. Accordingly, any action by a private person which involves invasion of personal privacy may be illegal and have consequences pursuant to civil law, but a penalty may not be imposed unless there is a legal basis.

160. The Children's Act must be interpreted to mean that parental responsibility may not be exercised in such a manner as to interfere arbitrarily with a child's private life or correspondence, nor may the parents behave in a manner which injures the child's honour or reputation inside or outside the home (see sections 30 and 33). It is not considered to be interference in a child's personal life when investigations/inquiries or measures pursuant to the Child Welfare Act (see chapter V) are implemented. Consideration of the child's best interests is the decisive factor (cf. chapters III and V).

161. Below are some examples of other provisions related to privacy; they do not apply particularly to children, but they do affect children:

(a) Pursuant to article 102 of the Constitution, a private home may not be searched unless there is suspicion of criminal activities. On the basis of the principle of legal authority, such a search may not be made unless there is a legal basis. The conditions for conducting a house search in connection with the investigation of criminal cases are laid down in section 192 of the Criminal Procedure Act. A search warrant will normally be issued by a court of law (cf. section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Act);

(b) It is a punishable offence to make defamatory statements, i.e. statements which violate the integrity of another person or are likely to damage another person's good name and reputation;

(c) The Act relating to Personal Registers, etc. of 1978 is intended to safeguard information of a personal nature. The Act contains provisions regulating what type of data may be stored, the right of the individual to information about the registers, and the obligation to correct erroneous information. The Act also stipulates that permission must be obtained before establishing registers which utilize electronic media or contain sensitive information. The authority to give or deny such a permission is vested in the Data Inspectorate.

H. Torture, or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 a)

162. Article 96 of the Constitution prohibits the use of torture during interrogations.

163. No death sentence or sentence to life imprisonment with no opportunity for release may be imposed pursuant to Norwegian law. The maximum prison sentence that may be imposed for crimes committed under the age of 18 years is 15 years (cf. sections 17 and 55 of the Penal Code). If one sentence is imposed for several crimes or minor offences at the same time, then the maximum sentence is 20 years. Pursuant to the probation provisions in the Prison Act of 1958, a prisoner may be released after having served two thirds of his sentence (but only after having served at least two months); prisoners are normally released after this period. In special cases, probation may be granted after only half the sentence has been served (cf. the Prison Act of 1958). In addition, it is always possible to apply to the Council of State for a pardon (cf. art. 20 of the Constitution).

164. Norway ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 5 September 1991, with no reservations.

165. Concerning the treatment of criminals who are minors when they are, for example, serving prison sentences, reference is made to chapters VIII and I.

V. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

166. Safeguarding what is best for the child, showing consideration for the best interests of the child and respecting the views of children are all part of public policy in Norway, and provisions to this effect are found in several acts. This chapter contains information on how such considerations are safeguarded in relation to family environment and alternative care. It also contains data concerning the number of children who have been subject to child welfare measures, placed in foster homes or adopted.

A. Parental guidance (art. 5)

167. Guidance and support for parents is provided through the municipal mother and child health centres, open to all children from birth to age seven. In addition to health check-ups and a vaccination programme, parents may obtain

advice and guidance concerning the mental and physical development of their children at the health centres. Moreover, parents may obtain advice and guidance through the municipal social and child welfare services. The municipalities also provide a school psychology service. This service offers guidance, when needed, to nursery, primary and secondary schools in connection, for example, with children who have learning difficulties or other problems. Even though the treatment focuses on the child and the child's development, parents may obtain advice concerning the child's development with regard to learning, social interaction with other children and other aspects of the child's psychological development.

168. The municipalities promote cooperation between the various agencies that provide services to children, adolescents and their families. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has initiated pilot projects in several municipalities and counties with a view to improving coordination of resources and simplifying the organization of services for children, adolescents and their families.

169. The family welfare offices play a major role in cases where parents may need special guidance and support in connection with crises and conflicts that arise in the family, for instance in connection with divorce. Some of the family welfare offices are private and some are public. Public family welfare offices are operated by municipalities or counties. In 1992 the State defrayed, on the average, 68 per cent of the expenses of family welfare offices. In a recent report to the Storting a proposal was made to enact legislation concerning this service.

170. The new Norwegian Marriage Act of 4 July 1991, which entered into force on 1 January 1993, introduces in section 26 a new system for compulsory mediation between married couples who apply for separation or divorce.

171. Married couples who have children of the marriage under the age of 16 must, in the event of separation or divorce, participate in mediation before the case may be brought before a court or the county governor. A case concerning parental responsibility must, pursuant to section 34 of the Children's Act, be mediated before it may be brought before a court or the county governor. This applies regardless whether the child's parents are married or not. This provision takes into account that a child's need for protection from his parents' conflicts is the same when unmarried couples separate, or when new conflicts arise between divorced parents concerning, for instance, parental responsibility.

172. The purpose of the mediation is to reach agreement on parental responsibility, where the child will be living on a permanent basis and on right of access. Emphasis is placed on what would be best for the child. It is regarded as important to protect children from their parents' conflicts and to try, whenever possible, to resolve such conflicts by means of a settlement. The parents must appear in person as long as there are no compelling reasons preventing them from doing so.

173. In most cases, mediation will take place at an institution for family counselling under the supervision of personnel who are specially trained for

this task. The county governor may appoint other mediators if necessary, for example priests, lawyers, or staff members from the school psychology service or social welfare office.

174. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is currently deliberating additional administrative provisions with regard to the new mediation system.

B. Parental responsibility for the development and rearing of a child (art. 18, 1-2)

175. The principle that both of the parents are responsible for the rearing and development of the child is laid down in the Children's Act. The Act contains several provisions on parental responsibility (cf. chapter 5 of the Act).

176. The definition of parental responsibility is laid down in section 30 of the Children's Act, which is quoted below:

> "The child has the right to enjoy care and consideration from those who have parental responsibility. These persons have the right and the duty to make decisions for the child in personal matters within the limits set by Sections 31 and 33. Parental responsibility shall be exercised in the interests of, and with respect to, the needs of the child.
>
> "Those who have parental responsibility are obliged to give the child a proper upbringing and maintenance. They shall ensure that the child receives an education according to its aptitude and ability.
>
> "The child must not be subjected to violence or in any other way treated so as to endanger the mental or physical health of the child."

177. Section 33 of the Children's Act states that "Parents shall give the child increasingly greater rights to make its own decisions as it gets older and until it comes of age."

178. The last paragraph of section 34 of the Children's Act states, moreover, with regard to parental responsibility:

> "If the parents share parental responsibility but the child resides permanently with only one parent, the other parent cannot refuse to allow the parent with whom the child resides to take decisions concerning the direct, everyday care of the child, including such questions as whether the child shall attend kindergarten, or the like. Nor can the parent with whom the child does not reside oppose the other parent's moving with the child to another part of the country."

179. It is only major decisions concerning the child, and which do not affect the child's everyday care, that must be made jointly by both parents.

180. Parents shall exercise their parental responsibility according to the needs and interests of the child. Parents are obligated to support their children according to their ability.

181. Parents who are married have joint parental responsibility for the children they have in common. Parents who are granted a separation or divorce may agree to joint parental responsibility or to sole parental responsibility for one of them (cf. section 34 of the Children's Act). Until an agreement has been reached or a decision made, the parents have joint parental responsibility.

182. If the parents agree to share parental responsibility, they may make agreements pertaining to where the child shall reside permanently. If the parents cannot agree, either of the parties may bring the matter before a court, or they may agree to allow the county governor to make a decision.

183. According to section 35 of the Children's Act, the mother alone has parental responsibility if the parents are not married when the child is born unless otherwise agreed beween the parents. Upon such an agreement, the parents may notify the National Population Register that they are to have joint parental responsibility, or that the father is to have sole parental responsibility. This provision applies regardless of whether the unmarried parents live together or have never lived together. In the event that there is disagreement, either of the parties may bring the matter before a court, or they may agree to allow the county governor to make a decision.

184. A great majority of parents are able to agree on both parental responsibility and with whom the child shall reside permanently when they separate. Previously the mother usually had sole responsibility, but now parents are increasingly choosing joint parental responsibility. The agreement between the parents is not subject to review by a court or other competent authority. It is assumed that an out-of-court agreement between the parents is usually the best solution for the child.

185. Pursuant to section 44 of the Children's Act the child has a right to associate with both of its parents, even if they live separately. The parents have joint responsibility for implementing this right. This principle applies regardless of whether the parents are married or not, have lived together after the child was born, and regardless of what type of contact there has been between the child and his parents.

186. The parents are free to agree on whatever type of arrangement concerning right of access they wish to have. The child's own opinion shall, however, be given increased weight as the child grows older.

187. "Ordinary right of access" means the right to see the child one afternoon a week, every other weekend, 14 days during the summer holidays and at Christmas or Easter.

188. The child is not entitled to initiate proceedings to establish a right of access. Section 44 of the Children's Act addresses the parents' right to access and stipulates that the parent with whom the child does not live has right of access to the child unless otherwise agreed or prescribed.

189. If one of the parents prevents the other from exercising his right of access, the right of access may be enforced by a coercive fine in accordance

with section 48 of the Children's Act. The Court of Enforcement may lay down a fixed coercive fine that shall apply each time the right of access is not respected.

190. If the parent who has the everyday care prevents the other parent from exercising his right of access, the parent who has the right of access may demand a new decision regarding who shall have parental responsibility and where the child shall reside permanently. This provision was added to section 44 of the Children's Act in 1989 after a public debate on how the right of access could be protected against arbitrary obstruction by the parent responsible for everyday care. It must be emphasized that the transfer of parental responsibility in such cases is far from routine. The principle applied here is that the child's best interests must be the decisive factor.

191. It has been pointed out that divorced parents, especially fathers, often do not exercise their right of access and that this is a bigger problem than the sabotaging of the right of access by the parent with whom the child lives. However, it has not been deemed to be in the best interests of the child to force parents to associate with the child.

192. In cases involving parental responsibility, where the child shall reside or right of access, the court may, according to section 46 of the Children's Act, make an interim decision on the right of access. Such a decision may apply generally until a final judgement has been rendered, or for a specified period.

193. If one of the parents has sole parental responsibility, that parent shall give the other parent information about the child upon request (cf. section 50 of the Children's Act). Such information may also be requested from schools, kindergartens, child welfare authorities and the police. A request for such information may, however, be refused if it may be detrimental to the child.

C. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27)

194. Both parents shall bear the expenses for the support and education of the child, according to the child's ability and aptitude and the financial circumstances of the parents (cf. section 51 of the Children's Act). If persons other than the parents have been assigned parental responsibility, then these persons have the same obligations to support the child. Support primarily encompasses expenses for food, clothing and housing, child care and leisure activities. The level of support must be adjusted to the parents' finances. It is, however, necessary that certain minimum support requirements be fulfilled.

195. The child himself determines what course of education he will follow when he is over the age of 15 (cf. section 32 of the Children's Act), but the parents must bear the expenses for an education that is in accordance with the child's abilities and interests. The obligation to support the child or make maintenance payments lasts until the child attains the age of 18. If the child, having attained the age of 18, wishes to continue his education after compulsory schooling, he is entitled to financial support for the duration of such education. In practice this means completion of upper secondary school, usually at the age of 19/20. The parents' obligation to support the child's education is nevertheless dependent on their financial resources. If the

parents cannot afford further support, the child must finance the education on his own, for example through grants and loans from the State Educational Loan Fund.

196. The child is entitled to maintenance payments. No one may renounce this right. Unless otherwise determined, these payments shall be made monthly in advance to the parent with whom the child is living.

197. Act No. 5 of 9 December 1955 relating to Recovery of Maintenance Payments regulates the recovery of maintenance payments from the parent who does not live with the child. The social security offices act in the capacity of maintenance enforcement officer. The maintenance enforcement officer shall ensure recovery when requested by the person entitled to the payments. The costs of recovery which are not covered by the person who makes the maintenance payments are covered by the public authorities.

198. Norway is, together with the other Nordic countries, party to a convention that ensures the recovery of maintenance payments stipulated by a court decision, administrative decision or written agreement in the other Nordic countries. Norway has also acceded to several other conventions on this subject, inter alia to the United Nations Convention of 20 June 1956 on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance, the 1988 Lugano Convention on Judicial Competence and on Enforcement of Judicial Decisions in Private Law, which among other things allows for the enforcement of judgements referring to maintenance allowances, and to the Hague Conventions of 15 April 1958 and 2 October 1973 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Maintenance Obligations.

199. Parents may agree on the amount of the maintenance payment, but the minimum maintenance payments are stipulated in regulations laid down pursuant to the Children's Act. Fixed maintenance payments are determined on the basis of the payer's gross income. The current programme implies that the maintenance payments shall at all times correspond to 11 per cent of the payer's gross income for one child, 18 per cent for two children, 24 per cent for three children and 28 per cent for four or more children.

200. The obligation to make maintenance payments pursuant to the Children's Act may be enforced retroactively, but not for more than three years.

D. Separation from parents (art. 9)

201. Children may be separated from their parents when a decision to that effect is made by the competent authorities. As a general rule the child shall, in spite of such a decision, have right to association with his parents, unless this is deemed to be negative for the child. A decision regarding separation and association shall be based on what is best for the child.

202. The authority to make decisions regarding the transfer of care is assigned to public county welfare boards. Such decisions are subject to legal review. The Child Welfare Act applies when decisions are made to separate children from their parents due to an inability to provide care on the part of the parents. Children are defined in the Act as persons under 18 years of age.

203. One objective of the Child Welfare Act is to strengthen the family, so that children can function in a satisfactory manner in their normal environment. Assistance measures in the home shall be provided so that the family's problems can be eliminated or alleviated. Moving the child from his home is not considered until such measures have failed.

204. The primary objective of the Child Welfare Act is to ensure that children and adolescents living in detrimental conditions receive the necessary assistance at the right time. This is stated in section 1-1 of the Act. In order to achieve this objective, it has been considered necessary that both investigations and measures be started at an early point. If child welfare services are involved at an early stage, then there is a greater opportunity to build on the parents' resources as the persons providing care.

205. The Child Welfare Act establishes precise procedural rules for child welfare services in connection with child welfare cases. In section 6-9 of the Act time-limits for the various phases in child welfare cases are established, in addition to sanctions if these time-limits are not met.

206. A child welfare case often starts with a report to the child welfare services, and the Act requires that child welfare services review such reports as soon as possible, and no later than one week after the report has been received. An investigation must be carried out as soon as possible and no later than three months after the report has been made. In special cases the time-limit may be six months. Measures must be implemented as soon as possible and no later than six weeks after the decision is made, when the reason for the decision is ill-treatment of a child at home or other forms of severe neglect.

207. According to section 4-3 of the Child Welfare Act an investigation shall be initiated when there are reasonable grounds to assume that the child has a special need for one of the assistance programmes in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The provision emphasizes that the investigation should not be more extensive than justified by its purpose, and that it should cause as little harm as possible to anyone affected.

208. The child welfare services must attempt to clarify the reasons that make intervention necessary, in addition to making the child and parents see what may be wrong and what may be done to improve the situation.

209. The authority to make decisions pursuant to the Child Welfare Act has been delegated to an independent public county social welfare board. The county social welfare boards have the competence to make decisions in cases involving, inter alia, the possible withdrawal of parental responsibility (cf. section 7-2 of the Child Welfare Act), or the use of coercive measures. As mentioned earlier, decisions of the country social welfare boards may be brought before a court for judicial review.

210. The municipalities are responsible for taking the initiative, examining cases and proposing measures. The actual decision shall, however, be made by the county social welfare board. These boards are independent of the Ministry and the county governors. They are chaired by experienced lawyers and several of their members are professional experts.

211. The parties in a child welfare case are usually the child and the child's parents. In exceptional cases, foster parents may also be granted party rights. Section 6-3 of the Child Welfare Act states that a child may act as a party in a case and claim party rights, provided that the child has attained the age of 15 and understands what the case involves. The county welfare board may also grant children under the age of 15 party rights in special cases. In cases involving measures for children with behavioural problems, the child shall always be considered a party.

212. The provision also states that the child shall be informed and his advice sought when the development, maturity and type of case indicate that this may be done. If the child has reached the age of 12 then he must always be given an opportunity to express his views before a decision is made with regard to placement in a foster home, institution or subsequent moves. Due consideration shall be given to the views of the child.

213. Oral negotiations shall be held in cases that are to be brought before the county social welfare board. There are no restrictions with regard to the parties' right to be present under the negotiations. It is of great importance to the parties involved that decisions are made without delay. The Act therefore prescribes that the negotiations must be held within two weeks, if possible.

214. The parents may bring the county social welfare board's decision before a court. Children who have party rights may also demand a legal review of the county social welfare board's decision. A court may try all aspects of the decision, with regard to both its validity and to the discretion exercised.

215. Before a decision is made, the child welfare services must make sure that they have as much information concerning the case as possible. According to section 6-4 of the Act, the public authorities have an obligation to inform the child welfare services of conditions that may lead to child welfare measures if there is reason to believe that the child has been subject to severe neglect. Persons subject to professional secrecy, such as doctors, nurses and psychologists, also have the same obligation to provide such information.

216. The parties in a child welfare case usually have the right to inspect case documents. In addition, they have a right to be represented by a lawyer or other representative in all phases of the proceedings. In cases that are decided by the county social welfare board, a party has the right, regardless of its financial situation, to have its expenses for a lawyer covered (cf. section 22 of the Act No. 35 of 13 June 1980 relating to Free Legal Aid).

E. Family reunification (art. 10)

217. The Immigration Act and the Immigration Regulations contain extensive provisions regarding family reunification. The main rule is that foreign nationals have a right to family reunification. This right primarily encompasses children, parents and spouses. For foreign nationals who have been granted political asylum or are "resettlement refuge", i.e. have come to Norway through UNHCR, this is an unconditional right (cf. section 17, subsection 3 of the Immigration Act).

218. Family reunification is granted for other foreign nationals, provided that the person residing in Norway (the "principal person") can guarantee financial support of the family (cf. sections 8 and 9 of the Immigration Act, and section 22 of the Immigration Regulations). However, this condition does not apply if the "principal person" has obtained a settlement permit pursuant to section 12 of the Immigration Act, or when the applicant is married to a Norwegian national residing in Norway. When the "principal person" is a child, the financial support requirement will normally not apply. This and other exceptions are laid down in sections 24 and 25 of the Immigration Regulations.

F. Children deprived of their family environment (art. 20)

219. Children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment are provided with special protection and assistance from the public authorities. This may involve children who are separated from their parents due to decisions pursuant to the Child Welfare Act. The public authorities are responsible for alternative forms of care pursuant to the Child Welfare Act. These alternative forms of care are, for example, foster homes, institutions or adoption.

220. In Norway the alternative form of supervision for children who are removed from their family environment is usually a foster home or, in some cases, an institution. When choosing a placement location, primary consideration shall be given to what is best for the child. The Child Welfare Act states that the location for placement is chosen on the basis of the child's personality and need for care and training in a stable environment. In addition, consideration must be given to the duration of the placement and the possibility and desirability of association with the parents in connection with the placement. In connection with this, it is important to take into consideration the child's cultural, linguistic and religious background.

221. As there has been an increase in recent years in the number of children from other cultures living in Norway, and a corresponding increase in the percentage of such children subject to child welfare measures, there is a growing awareness of the importance of taking the child's cultural and linguistic background into consideration when prescribing such measures. Thus, when a child from another culture must be placed, the child welfare authorities try to find foster parents with the same cultural background.

G. Adoption (art. 21)

222. Since 1917, adoption has been regulated in Norway by a separate Act, which has been amended as needed. The Adoption Act currently in force is from 1986. The purpose of the adoption rules and practices in Norway is to ensure the best interests of the child as prescribed by article 21 of the Convention.

223. Pursuant to the Act, adoption orders are administratively granted by the Ministry. However, the county governors have been authorized to grant adoption orders in cases involving Norwegian children. The Government Adoption Office has been authorized to grant adoption orders in cases where children are adopted from other countries, if the adoption order is not granted in the child's country of origin.

224. Children under the age of 18 may only be adopted with the consent of their parents, unless parental responsibility has been revoked. Pursuant to the Child Welfare Act, the county social welfare board shall, when a decision has been made to revoke parental responsibility, give its consent in place of the parents. Parents who do not share parental responsibility shall be entitled to express their views on the adoption. The adoption of children who have attained the age of 12 may only be carried out if the child gives his consent.

225. In 1991, 833 children were adopted in Norway. Around one third of the adoptions were of Norwegian children, whereas the remaining two thirds involved foreign children. Most of the foreign children came from South America (especially Columbia) and Asia, whereas a relatively small proportion came from North and Central America, Africa and Europe. The number of adoptions has remained fairly stable at around 800 or 900 per year since the beginning of the 1980s.

226. The number of adoptions involving Norwegian children has decreased during the last few decades. In 1980, 68 per cent of the adopted children were Norwegian; in 1985, 43 per cent; and in 1991, less than 33 per cent were Norwegian. Most of the Norwegian children who are adopted are adopted by their step-parents. Throughout the 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s the number of children adopted by step-parents has represented around 70 to 75 per cent of adoptions.

227. If one disregards the adoption of step-children, the number of Norwegian adoptions has been between 80 and 100 in recent years. Most of these adoptions involve cases where the child welfare services have had to intervene due to neglect. If it becomes apparent that placement in a foster home will be permanent and returning to the biological parents would be inadvisable, the next step after foster home placement may be an application to adopt the child, and in some cases an adoption order is granted.

228. Parallel to the decline in Norwegian adoptions, there has been an increase in the number of children adopted from abroad. The number of adoptions from abroad has been between 500 and 600 in recent years. The foreign children are on the average much younger than the Norwegian children. In 1991, two thirds of the foreign children were under the age of three, but this was only true of one sixth of the Norwegian children.

229. The Norwegian adoption legislation recognizes and provides for international adoptions. Any person resident in Norway who wishes to adopt a child from abroad must have prior approval from the central authorities (the Government Adoption Office). Such approval is granted on the basis of various criteria, including a recommendation from the local health and social welfare office which, after several interviews with the applicants, draws up a report on their fitness to receive a child from another country. The Government Adoption Office deals with about 800 such applications every year. Approval is granted for adoption of children from a specified country on the condition that the adoption is arranged through a Norwegian adoption association approved by the Norwegian authorities. Permission to adopt a child through other channels than an approved association is only given in special circumstances.

230. Currently, three adoption associations are authorized to arrange the adoption of children from various countries throughout the world. They are under an obligation to cooperate with the authorities in the countries from which children are adopted. The Government Adoption Office supervises the associations' activities in Norway and abroad, including the financial aspects of these activities. Only idealistic, non-profit associations are authorized to arrange the adoption of children from abroad. The requirement that adoption from abroad must be organized through such approved organizations allows close supervision of adoption. It can thus be ensured that those involved in the adoption process do not make any form of financial gain that might fall within the category of the purchase and sale of children. Although it is unlikely that any such financial gain is made in connection with adoption from abroad in Norway, the costs connected with the adoption of children from abroad are high and rising. On certain conditions, a lump sum of NOK 10,000 (US$ 1,700) may therefore be granted per child adopted from abroad.

231. Given the current state of affairs and likely developments in the foreseeable future, Norway will continue to be a recipient country when it comes to international adoption. Norway is prepared to enter into bilateral agreements with countries from which children are adopted, in order to ensure adequate control of intercountry adoption. One such agreement is currently in force, and others are being drawn up. However, the most important development in this field at present is the preparation of a new Hague convention on international adoption. Norway is following this work with great interest.

H. Illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)

232. Norway's legislation contains provisions aimed at the prevention of illegal transfer of children to, and non-return of children from foreign countries, and has acceded to multilateral agreements for this purpose.

233. The abduction of children is encompassed by the first paragraph of section 216 of the Penal Code, which reads as follows: "Any person who causes or is accessory to causing a minor to be unlawfully deprived of or kept deprived of his parents' or other authorized persons' care shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years." This provision also applies to cases where biological parents unlawfully remove a child from a foster home or institution, when the child welfare authorities have taken over the care of the child. The Director General of Public Prosecutions has assumed that section 216 of the Penal Code also applies if joint parental responsibility is violated following separation or divorce. This is, however, questionable and has not yet been tried in the courts.

234. Norway has acceded to the European Convention of 20 May 1980 on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children, and the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Both of the conventions were incorporated into Norwegian law in the Act of 8 July 1988 relating to the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Decisions Concerning Parental Responsibility, etc., and the Restoration of Custody.

235. The Ministry of Justice has issued a detailed circular which describes the procedures to be followed when applying for restoration pursuant to the conventions, and the general substance of the provisions.

I. Abuse and neglect (art. 19) including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)

236. Protection against the abuse and neglect of children is described in the Child Welfare Act and appurtenant regulations, which also encompass the measures child welfare services may implement in order to promote and exercise such protection (see chapter III).

237. Child welfare services in Norway have for some years had inadequate capacity to examine and follow up all the cases in which neglect or abuse has been reported. Norway therefore gives special priority to child welfare services through a three-year national development programme, which started on 1 January 1991 and will continue until the end of 1993. This programme is referred to in more detail in chapter I of this report in connection with priority areas. The programme has resulted in a significant reduction in the "queues" for child welfare services.

238. With regard to the abuse of children, the Norwegian authorities have become especially aware of the fact that some children are sexually abused, for example by members of their family or other adults who are close to the children. There are no certain figures with regard to the extent of this problem. Some researchers assume that approximately 5 per cent of children are sexual abused before they reach the age of 18. Sexual abuse of children is dealt with in chapter VIII of this report.

239. The general provisions of the Penal Code concerning bodily harm also apply to children. Violence against children and other violations of their physical integrity are punishable pursuant to these provisions. Moreover, corporal punishment is not permitted in connection with child-rearing. Section 30 of the Children's Act expressly states that the child must not be subjected to violence or in any other way be treated so as to endanger his mental and physical health.

240. A special provision which applies to the neglect or ill-treatment of children and other family members is included in section 219 of the Penal Code.

241. The exploitation of children through child labour is an unknown phenomenon in Norway today. (Reference is made to chapter II concerning legal restrictions on the use of minors in paid work.)

242. An important strategy in the fight against negligent treatment of children is to strengthen the parents' opportunity and ability to be good parents. Providing support to the homes and relief measures through child welfare services, financial support and building nursery schools, which are dealt with in other parts of this report, are all important tools in this connection.

243. Violence in the home, such as the abuse of women, also affects the children in the home. It can affect the mother's ability to be a good parent, and it is a violation against children if they are forced to witness their mother being abused.

244. Many centres have been established throughout the country where women who are subject to abuse and violence can seek refuge together with their children. The centres are usually established and run on a voluntary basis, normally with financial support from the State and municipality. The State meets 50 per cent of the costs, and the rest is defrayed by the municipalities and other contributors. These crisis centres are intended for temporary accommodation and their objective is to help the women help themselves. They help the women make contact with the public welfare services.

245. Children who have been neglected and removed from their homes are, as previously mentioned, placed in foster homes, children's homes and youth homes, or - less frequently - in psychiatric institutions for a period. The rehabilitation of these children therefore takes place in these foster homes and institutions.

246. Usually children and adolescents are placed in foster homes. Far from all of these children need psychiatric treatment. A new environment to provide better care is what is most often needed. Many do, however, need additional follow-up and help. Some of the children in need of additional follow-up are placed in reinforced foster homes. This means that one of the foster parents has the responsibility for the care of the foster child as a full-time job, for which he/she is paid.

247. The work of the foster parents is probably the most important contribution to the social reintegration of children under alternative care. It is therefore important that the foster homes are provided with good follow-up and guidance, that there is an adequate number of foster parents and that there is stability in the foster homes. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is working to improve the foster home programme; it aims to improve the recruitment and reuse of foster parents and improve training. This work is taking place in cooperation with the Norwegian Foster Home Association and the municipalities and counties as part of the child welfare services development programme.

248. In some cases, children under alternative care require special help with school or psychotherapy. This can be given to children in training or treatment institutions, outpatient therapy, group therapy, etc. In cases where the child does not live at the institution, such help can be given at the same time as the child lives at home with his foster parents.

249. Children who have been sexually abused often require special treatment. Child psychiatry is working on building its competence in this field, and children who have been subject to such abuse are offered psychological help or treatment. The plan of action for sexually abused children presented by the Government in June 1992 states that it is important to strengthen, rationalize and coordinate assistance and treatment programmes for children and adolescents who have been subject to sexual abuse. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is working on a report to the Storting on the sexual abuse of children, which will be presented in the summer of 1993.

250. Sometimes the child welfare services take over the care of children and adolescents who have run away from home. It is often the municipal child welfare duty officers that first come into contact with such children and adolescents. In cases where attempts to reintegrate the children with their family fail, the child welfare services take over the care of these children or adolescents and place the children under alternative care in foster homes or children's or youth homes. The Child Welfare Act also allows the placement of a child in an institution without child welfare services taking over the care of the child, if he and those who have him in their care consent to this. If the child has reached the age of 15, his consent is sufficient.

J. Periodic review of placement (art. 25)

251. The municipality in which the foster home is located is responsible for the supervision and approval of foster homes. Child welfare services in the municipality are obligated to guide and follow up the foster home, pursuant to regulations issued by the Ministry.

252. Child welfare services shall appoint a supervisor for children who are placed in foster homes, whose main task is to ensure that the child is given adequate care in the foster home.

253. The county is responsible for the establishment and operation of institutions that are encompassed by the Child Welfare Act. The county governor is responsible for continuous supervision of the institutions, if necessary, with the assistance of a supervisory committee. If the county governor finds that an institution is not operated in a proper manner, he may issue orders to remedy the situation or to close down the institution.

254. The Child Welfare Act also states that child welfare services must carefully follow the development of children who have been placed in alternative care and follow the development of the parents.

255. According to section 4-21 of the Child Welfare Act a decision for alternative care shall be reversed when the parents are able to give the child adequate care. Emphasis must also be placed on problems the child may experience when he moves back to its parents. A basic prerequisite for the reversal of a decision for alternative care is that the parents can give the child adequate care, and it can be assumed that this situation will be permanent. The basis for the evaluation must be what is best for the child.

256. In the following paragraphs some statistics are provided pertaining to the number of children under alternative care.

257. The number of children who may have been homeless or without a permanent place of residence when the child welfare services intervene is unknown. It sometimes happens that children run away from home and wander around with no permanent place of residence. It is generally assumed that all these children come into contact with the child welfare services, often through the child welfare officers in the municipalities. Some of these children reject offers of help and otherwise make it difficult to have lasting contact with them. They disappear from the care of child welfare services or run away from youth homes, etc. The number of children who are homeless or without a permanent place of residence represents a very small part of child welfare clients. The

number of children who run away from youth homes, etc. and are still without a permanent place of residence after child welfare services have intervened is very low. In Oslo, a secured institution is being planned to take care of children and adolescents who cannot be held at normal children's and youth homes and are in need of special educational and psychological follow-up. A need for approximately 10 to 15 places has been registered for such children and adolescents.

258. A total of 22,818 children under child welfare measures was registered in the municipalities at the end of 1992. The number of children in Norway under the age of 18 at the same time was approximately 985,000. The number of children under child welfare measures encompassed children for whom preventive measures have been implemented (55.6 per cent), children committed to the care of the child welfare services (30 per cent), children who are waiting for measures (5 per cent) and children under other measures (10 per cent). Many of the children waiting for measures were temporarily placed. Most often they were waiting for a place in a reinforced foster home, a situation that applies to children both under and over the age of 12. The rest were the children under the age of 12 waiting for a place in an ordinary foster home, and children over 12 waiting for a place in a long-term institution.

259. The number of children under child welfare measures has increased considerably during the last few years. This is largely due to increased resources from the development programme, which have made it possible for the child welfare services to deal with many of the reports that were previously not dealt with and made it possible for them to carry out investigations, examine needs and find suitable arrangements for the children.

260. The last year for which we have detailed statistics on the age and sex distribution and the types of child welfare measures is 1991. The following will therefore concern figures from this year. At the end of 1991 there were 17,848 children under child welfare measures. During the whole year, however, 20,493 children had been under such measures. These include adolescents age 18 and over; they represented approximately 9 per cent of the clients of the child welfare services. The reason that there are so many adolescents above the age limit laid down in the Child Welfare Act is that measures which are implemented before the child attains the age of 18 can continue until age 20, with the consent of the adolescent. In certain cases, measures implemented before the child attains 18 can continue after the age of 18 without the consent of the adolescent, pursuant to a county social welfare board decision.

261. The number of children under child welfare measures in the course of 1991 was 18.4 per 1,000 children from the age of 0 to 19. In 1992, children under child welfare measures still represented less than 2 per cent of all children. This is, however, the number at a particular point in time. The number of children who are under child welfare measures in the course of their upbringing is higher. There are no figures for how many children come into contact with child welfare services before they reach the age of 18.

262. The majority of children under child welfare measures were boys, and the highest figures were for boys aged 6 and 15 to 16 (cf. Table 1).

TABLE 1

Children under protection during 1991, by age and sex

	All	Boys	Girls	Unknown
Absolute figures	20 493	10 860	9 606	27
Per 1 000 children	18.4	19.0	17.7	

Age	Absolute figures	Per 1 000 children
0	272	4.5
1	587	9.5
2-3	783	13.2
4	936	16.2
5	1 046	19.2
6	1 164	21.8
7	1 192	23.0
8	1 108	21.6
9	1 003	19.7
10	1 027	19.7
11	1 057	20.3
12	1 049	20.1
13	1 130	21.5
14	1 104	20.9
15	1 154	22.2
16	1 288	23.7
17	1 410	24.6
18	1 268	20.8
19	895	14.3
20 years and over	454 566	7.0

263. Of all the children under child welfare measures the majority were under preventive measures and not placed in foster homes or institutions due to the transfer of care. This was the case in 1992 as well as in previous years. During 1992 the share of children under preventive measures has increased. Of all the children under child welfare measures in 1991, approximately 36 per cent were placed in foster homes or institutions after the transfer of care; the others were provided with preventive or other measures. In the beginning of 1991 there were 5,612 children and adolescents in foster homes and 1,723 in child welfare institutions. At the end of the year the corresponding figures were 4,122 and 971.

Their distribution according to age was as follows:

TABLE 2

Children in foster and children's homes in 1991, by age

	Total	-2	3-6	7-13	14-17	18-	Others
Foster home	4 122	285	685	1 589	1 776	378	9
Children's home	971	79	74	253	441	123	1

264. Of all the children under child welfare measures at the end of the year (1991) who were provided with preventive measures, assistance programmes in the home and relief represented 27 per cent, "big brother/sister" programmes 27 per cent, and financial assistance 20 per cent of the measures. The distribution of the preventive measures according to age was as follows:

TABLE 3

Children 1/ under preventive assistance at the end of 1991, by age and type of assistance

	Total	-2 years	3-6	7-9	14-17	18-	Others
Preventive assistance	10 114	904	2 562	3 687	2 175	772	14
Economic assistance	1 975	115	336	554	571	395	4
Kindergarten	2 017	288	1 485	204	22	16	2
Person selected to support child	2 759	77	320	1 468	734	156	4
Supervision	1 736	273	402	595	338	124	4
Relief (weekend foster home, etc.)	2 342	243	690	1 089	276	42	2
Home-help services	414	62	98	169	66	18	1
Assistance in housing/home improvement	111	8	13	18	32	40	-
Assistance in employment	54	1	2	6	22	23	-
Assistance in work training	78	1	1	4	41	31	-
Out-patient treatment	218	6	31	96	58	26	1
Living/working commune	75	-	-	3	42	30	-
Institution for alcoholics and drug addicts	58	8	4	2	20	24	-
Crisis centres for maltreated women	10	2	3	1	3	1	-
General hospital	19	4	7	3	4	1	-
Psychiatric hospital	44	-	1	14	22	7	-
Other institution	172	16	6	43	83	22	2
Other assistance	1 517	121	256	519	459	160	2

1/ Each child may have received several types of assistance. Hence, the sum total of types of assistance is greater than the number of children who have received assistance.

265. With regard to new children under child welfare measures, the number provided with preventive measures was higher (85 per cent) and the number under alternative care was much lower (15 per cent) than for all children under child welfare measures in the course of a year. Preventive measures are almost always implemented before children come under alternative care.

266. The reason for implementing measures for new children coming in under child welfare measures was most often associated with environmental factors, and less often with the behaviour of the child:

TABLE 4

New cases of children placed under protection, by reason for intervention (1991)

Total	4 267
Environment, total	2 703
(a) Not properly cared for	2 053
(b) Not properly provided for	510
Both (a) and (b)	140
Behaviour, total	814
(a) Maladjusted	649
(b) Handicapped	155
Both (a) and (b)	10
Environment and behaviour	.
Unknown	533

267. Often it is the family (or the child) who takes up the issue with the child welfare services. This varies, however, according to the age of the child. With regard to the youngest children, it is, in addition to the family, often the health authorities or social welfare office that takes up the issue. For children from the age of 7 to 17, it is, in addition to the family itself or the social welfare office, often the school or the school psychology service that takes up the issue:

TABLE 5

New cases of children placed under protection, by age and who reported the case (1991)

Who reported the case	Total	-2 years	3-6	7-9	14-17	18-	Others
All	4 267	572	942	1 468	1 032	247	6
The child or the child's family	1 513	147	355	467	395	147	3
Social service	1 048	231	247	321	193	55	1
School/school psychology serv.	826	23	90	429	270	14	-
Police	226	31	44	48	85	18	-
Health authority	559	144	159	166	73	16	1
Others	550	64	137	192	117	39	1
Unknown	531	77	115	186	135	18	-

268. The figures for children under child welfare measures give an idea of the extent to which children are having difficulties or need help and support. On the other hand, the figures do not present an accurate picture. Many of the children under child welfare measures have been given a good care situation. There are, however, other children who may have difficulties without the child

welfare services being involved, because the problems have not been brought to the attention of the child welfare services. Other children can have problems that do not involve neglect by the family.

269. The interests of children are more or less safeguarded by the statutory regulations, but factors other than the statutory framework are of course of importance with regard to ensuring that all children are guaranteed a good and safe upbringing. There are, therefore, various financial allocation programmes designed to ensure necessary, appropriate measures for those children who need such measures.

270. When children are lonely or have an unsatisfied need for contact, it may be due to a lack of playmates or too little contact with their parents or other adults. In recent years, there has been greater focus on this in Norway. Some children, through such channels as the contact line for children and adolescents (see chapter I), have expressed a need for more contact with adults. This may in part be due to inadequate provision of care or lack of attention to the needs of the child on the part of the parents. It may be due to the parents not having enough time to spare for their children, for example, when a great deal of time is used for earning a living. The parents' strained finances may play a role here. It is also a problem that the school day and holidays do not coincide with the parents' working hours, and that the local environment is in many instances "poorer" than before, because grandparents or other possible providers of care are no longer part of it. The development of networks in the local environment has therefore been placed on the agenda in many places. Family welfare services and family counselling are also important in order to enhance the parents' knowledge and awareness of children's needs.

271. The most important measure is probably the extra-curricular activity programmes, which not only provide supervision after ordinary school hours, but also offer programmes for the children during holidays. The experience gained from these relatively new programmes has been good, and the number of children participating in them is rapidly increasing. It is the responsibility of the municipalities to develop these programmes, with financial assistance from the State. An important objective here is that the financial contribution from the parents must be low. It is important to avoid a situation where the parents of children who need supervision while their parents work do not apply for extra-curricular activity programmes because they feel that they cannot afford it.

272. To make amends for the difficulties that can arise and the insecurity felt by children when the family has financial problems, there are many allocation programmes for families with children in Norway. These allocations assist single parents in particular. Single parents belong to the lowest income group in Norway.

273. Only a very small portion of the financial allocations is reflected in the figures for preventive child welfare measures (Table 3). The national insurance and child benefit programmes, which support all children, are of primary importance. With regard to child benefits, these are equal for all children, with the exception of single parents who are given child benefits

for an extra child. There is a debate in Norway concerning whether the large amounts of money used for child benefits could be used differently, and be targeted more to those who need it most.

274. The State ensures, through the National Insurance, a certain minimum income for all if the family provider is without income, for example, in the event of unemployment (unemployment benefits) or through aid to single parents. In addition, municipal social welfare based on financial need is often applicable. This aid may, however, seem insufficient, especially if the family has special financial difficulties due to high living expenses or high home mortgage loans. A new programme involving the remission of home mortgage debts for those with special difficulties has recently been introduced, among other things to prevent children from suffering due to financial problems in the family.

275. There is little severe poverty in Norway. It may, however, be very difficult for parents to pay their bills and make their mortgage payments, for example, in the event of unemployment. Some children are concerned about their parents' financial problems and some may not be able to participate in activities that most children enjoy because of the family's financial situation. In a rich country like Norway this may cause problems for the child.

276. Among the children who grow up in families with a difficult financial situation, with an overrepresentation of unemployment and social welfare recipients, there are relatively many children with a background from a foreign culture. The authorities are therefore working on an analysis of the living conditions of children and adolescents with an immigrant background. The aim is a collective effort that will improve the integration and participation of these children in Norwegian society (see also chapters I and VIII).

277. Of all the recipients of social welfare in Norway, families with children represent a minority. The majority of social welfare recipients are single with no children, and most of these are men. Of all the families with children receiving social welfare, single parents represent the largest group.

278. The authorities are making an effort to gather information on the situation of children in Norway in general and, in particular, child welfare children and how child welfare services function. "Children in a Welfare Society" is a special research programme that started in 1988 and is supported, inter alia, by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. The primary objectives of the programme are to focus on the environment in which children are brought up and their development potential, improve the knowledge of the relationship between the living conditions of children and the development of society, and stimulate research on children that is relevant for planning purposes. In connection with this programme, there is a separate subprogramme for child welfare research. This programme focuses, among other things, on the evaluation and analysis of the effect of measures implemented by the child welfare services. Better, more complete knowledge of this field will be important to the development of child welfare services in the future.

VI. HEALTH AND WELFARE

A. Survival and development (art. 6.2)

279. The parents' obligation to care for and support the child is important with regard to the child's survival and development. This was taken up in chapter V. The social security programmes and benefits, etc. which assist parents in this connection are important to the child's right to survival and development. This will be dealt with later on in this chapter. In addition, the child welfare services, which are there to provide assistance or take over the care of the child when the parents' ability to care for the child is inadequate, are important for the development of the child. This has been treated in chapter V. Health services are of course of vital importance to the survival and development of children. These services are discussed later in this chapter in connection with the reference to article 24.

280. In addition to the aforementioned areas, the prevention of accidents is a very important part of safeguarding the child's right to survival and development, and the prevention of accidents involving children has been given high priority in the five-year period from 1989 to 1993. A plan of action to reduce the number of injuries related to the home, school and recreation was introduced for the first time by the Government in 1989. The plan was amended in 1991 and is under continuous evaluation and development. Six ministries are participating in the follow-up of this plan.

281. The Directorate of Health is the highest health authority with regard to the prevention of accidents and provides supervision and guidance in that regard. The prevention of accidents under the Directorate of Health is carried out through various agencies such as the National Institute for Public Health. The institute has established a register for injuries which enables it to monitor, analyse, provide information and give advice on preventive measures, in addition to evaluating the efficacy of these measures.

282. The Product Control Act aims to prevent a product from causing injury and harming the environment by means of pollution, waste, noise, etc. Several regulations affecting child safety have been adopted pursuant to the Product Control Act. One of these regulations protects children from contact with chemicals. Regulations concerning child-proof packaging for certain household chemical substances and products were adopted in 1988.

283. Toy safety is another area which is given high priority in the prevention of accidents involving children. Guidelines for toy safety were drafted in 1984. These guidelines will now be given a stronger legal basis. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment have therefore drafted regulations relating to toy safety pursuant to the Product Control Act.

284. Road traffic is a serious threat to the life and health of a child. In 1992, 20 children between the ages of 0 and 14 were killed as the result of road traffic accidents. The figures for previous years were higher. Of the children (under the age of 15) that were killed, 12 were passengers in cars, 5 were cyclists and 3 were pedestrians. A total of 11,589 people were injured in road traffic accidents in 1991, and 332 of these people died as a result of

their injuries. The number of pedestrians injured or killed has declined somewhat, but the number of bicycle accidents has increased for all age groups in the population.

285. The authorities seek to prevent road traffic accidents involving children and adolescents through signs, speed-bumps and severe speed restrictions in residential areas and near schools, in addition to making sure that there are traffic-free play areas in residential areas. In practice, this often entails the development of new areas where the interests of children can be taken into account.

286. The "Aksjon skoleveg" (Protect school roads) programme, which was started in 1979, provides funds for physical protection measures on county and municipal roads in the local environment. The central Government allocated NOK 32 million for this purpose in 1992 and 1993. In addition, there was an extraordinary grant of NOK 11 million in connection with the county road network. The municipalities must, however, defray 50 per cent of the costs. Not all of the municipalities take advantage of this government aid programme, because they must partly finance the projects. Therefore, the central authorities have defrayed 75 per cent of the costs in certain cases. A similar central Government aid programme is available for measures related to the national road network, and the building of footpaths and cycling tracks along these roads.

287. In addition to these physical protection measures, there are also information campaigns and educational programmes to promote traffic safety. The organization "Trygg Trafikk" (Safe Traffic) receives almost NOK 14 million annually from the central authorities. All children are provided with traffic education in primary and lower secondary school. Information campaigns promoting the use of cycling helmets are part of this education programme.

B. Disabled children (art. 23)

288. A reform was implemented on 1 January 1991 which transferred the responsibility for the mentally disabled to the municipalities. The reform encompassed the mentally disabled of all ages, including children, and it implied a transition from institutional care to open care in communes or separate dwellings. An important principle with regard to the reform is the recognition that mentally disabled persons are an integral part of society. In order to safeguard this, several provisions were adopted in the form of Acts (provisional), regulations, circulars, guidelines and information campaigns addressing the public authorities and the general public. Substantial financial resources were made available to the municipalities.

289. Among the provisions adopted relating to deinstitutionalization was the requirement that no one was to be transferred to more inferior conditions than they had in an institution. A right to appeal was established and a plan for each individual resident in the institutions was provided.

290. In 1990 the Government presented its 1990/93 plan of action for the disabled. Organizations for the disabled are important partners of the authorities in connection with this plan of action. Most of the measures in the plan of action apply to the disabled in general, regardless of age, but some of them are directly aimed at the situation of the family and designed to

alleviate the situation of the family and any children or adolescents. Some examples are funds earmarked for relief measures and special relief campaigns, including the training and recruitment of "big brothers and sisters". In addition, there are several projects and development measures in the municipalities in connection with the reform for the mentally disabled and the plan of action for the disabled.

291. A competence centre for autistic children is being established, and a corresponding centre for children born deaf and blind has already been established. Corresponding measures are being implemented for other small groups with disabilities in connection with the plan of action for the disabled.

292. In 1992, proposed guidelines were issued for the buildings, equipment, staff, etc. used for dwellings for 24-hour care for children and adolescents. The provisions were issued to ensure that physically and mentally disabled children in need of 24-hour care were provided with safe living conditions in their local municipalities.

293. The Ministry of Culture has implemented several measures in accordance with the Government's plan of action for the disabled. Some examples are:

(a) Culture conferences were held at the county level in 1992. The aim of these conferences was to stimulate increased activities for the disabled in their local environment. The target groups in connection with this were the county and municipal decision makers, the staffs of the cultural, health and social welfare departments, volunteer organizations, and other interested parties;

(b) Funds were granted for the establishment of interpretation centres for the deaf and blind in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. One of the objectives of the interpretation centres is to make it possible for a greater number of deaf, and deaf and blind people to participate in cultural programmes;

(c) Funds are available to stimulate the production of adapted literature;

(d) NOK 3.3 million were allocated in 1992 to arrange and initiate physical activities for the disabled;

(e) Courses and conferences have been held to focus on the need for physical activities for the disabled.

294. The Sports Department of the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for physical activity courses for the disabled, has in recent years educated instructors in special arrangements, adaptations and the presentation of equipment and aids to make the activities more accessible to disabled children.

295. Funds have been granted to stimulate the start-up of courses on physical activities for the disabled. Recreation funds are now available for disabled children, especially in relation to winter activities, and additional

financial aid has been channelled to athletic clubs that arrange sports for the disabled. Funds have also been allocated to establish sports schools for the mentally disabled. The Ministry of Culture will continue these measures in 1993 in order to achieve the plan of action's goal of "full participation and equality" for the disabled.

296. The municipality is responsible for ensuring that children with disabilities are as far as possible admitted to ordinary kindergartens. Such children shall be given priority with regard to admission provided that they will be able to benefit from attending the kindergarten.

297. Most disabled children over the age of three who can benefit from an ordinary nursery school are offered a place in a nursery school at present. Ten per cent of the ordinary funds from the central Government to nursery schools is earmarked for the disabled. For disabled children under the age of three, the problem is similar to that experienced by normal healthy children - there are not enough places.

C. Health and health services (art. 24)

298. Health services can be divided into municipal primary health services and hospital services, which are the jurisdiction of the counties with the exception of certain national hospitals. The Storting has passed legislation which delegates the planning, operation and financing of health and health care services to the municipalities and counties. The central authorities' responsibility is primarily the development of control systems which function satisfactorily in relation to our national health policy objectives.

299. All children and adolescents requiring hospital treatment receive this free of charge, and medical treatment in Norway is of a high international standard. Some private outpatient treatment is available.

300. Children may be accompanied by their parents when they are admitted to a hospital. This means that the parents often participate actively in the care of sick children. Hospitalized children are also provided with an educational programme if their stay at the hospital is of a certain duration and the child's condition in other respects permits. In addition, arrangements are made for various types of recreational activities. A great deal is done to make a child's hospitalization as positive an experience as possible for the child and his family.

301. Private organizations for children with certain diseases or ailments also contribute a great deal to the care of sick children.

302. The primary health services in the municipalities are of paramount importance in ensuring that the child receives the necessary medical assistance and health care, as well as with regard to the diagnosis of ailments that require hospital treatment. The primary health services are based on the Municipal Health Service Act of 1982 and, in addition to the school health services and mother and child health stations, consist of ordinary doctor's surgeries, physiotherapy, midwifery and community nursing. The municipalities have 24-hour emergency medical services, provided by intermunicipal cooperation in many municipalities.

303. On the average, there were 1,227 inhabitants per full-time doctor practising in the municipal health services in 1991. For the mother and child health stations, there were 319 inhabitants up to the age of 6 per doctor; and for the school health services, there were 953 inhabitants between the ages of 6 and 16 per doctor. The number of full-time positions in the school health services and at ordinary doctors' surgeries has remained stable since 1987, but the number of positions at mother and child health services has increased.

304. The mother and child health stations in the municipalities are of great importance with regard to ensuring suitable prenatal and postnatal health care for mothers and thus reducing the infant mortality rate. They are an important part of the primary health services, and play a key role with regard to providing people with information on child health and nutrition. They are also very important with regard to the development of preventive health care and parental guidance.

305. A public health nurse is the administrative leader of the preventive health care services for infants and babies provided by the health stations. The medical services are headed by a doctor.

306. The objective of the activities of the health stations is to prevent disease, including dental disease, and injuries among children, in addition to promoting the physical, mental and social health of children. The health stations offer programmes which are voluntary and free, including a screening programme for evaluation of the child's development between the ages of 0 and 7. Doctors are responsible for somatic examinations. Public health nurses and doctors cooperate in connection with tasks which involve evaluation and advice in relation to the child's health, such as nutrition, breast-feeding, development through play and stimulation, mental hygiene, cleanliness, sleep, accident prevention and vaccines.

307. Babies and infants are offered five examinations by a doctor, in addition to examinations by and consultations with a public health nurse. Health stations are easily accessible for users in the municipalities, and their programmes are utilized by almost 100 per cent of those eligible. Home visits are a priority area for the public health nurses, so that contact can be made with those families that, for some reason or another, do not participate in the programmes. Health stations are responsible for coordinating measures for disabled children and preschool children who have a need for special services, for example, school psychology services.

308. The following vaccinations are offered to infants and babies:

Age of the child	Vaccination against
3 months	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough
5 "	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough
6 "	Poliomyelitis
7 "	Poliomyelitis
10 "	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough
16 "	Poliomyelitis

Boosters for all of these vaccinations are administered in the primary and lower secondary school. In addition, vaccinations against tuberculosis, which is the only mandatory vaccination, are given.

309. The Municipal Health Act is also the legal basis for the school health services. There are regulations for the school health services which cover preventive health care for school-age children and adolescents. They apply to the pupils of primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools.

310. The purpose of the school health services is to promote the overall health of the pupils, and prevent disease and injuries in cooperation with the home and the school, in addition to identifying and solving any health-related problems associated with the situation of pupils in general. The school health services reach large groups of children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 20 through the school. The school health services perform the following tasks: systematic medical examinations, individual health guidance and other medical measures, including health information.

311. The school health services provide assistance in connection with a wide range of problems, for example, psychological and social problems, harassment, repetitive stress ailments and accidents. The school health services are especially important with regard to the prevention of drug abuse and eating disorders. Emphasis is placed on health education in order to provide children and adolescents with a working knowledge of their own body and health, and prepare them so that they can make independent decisions. The school and the school health services cooperate in this area. One objective is to equip the children with the ability to tackle certain undesirable pressures, for example, in connection with drugs, their appearance, achievement, etc. which can result in eating disorders. Eating disorders are a problem that has been on the rise in recent years, for both boys and girls, though it usually affects young girls.

312. A plan of action to reduce the infant mortality rate was implemented in 1992. By improving prenatal and postnatal care, the infant mortality rate can hopefully be reduced. The infant mortality rate in 1991 was 1.6 per 1,000 live births, the lowest infant mortality rate ever registered in Norway. Specifically, sudden infant deaths from unknown causes (cot deaths) have been reduced the most, from 142 in 1989 to 74 in 1991. In 1991, there were 387 deaths among children under the age of one. In 1988, this figure was 468. The Government also intends to increase the amount of research in connection with the causes of cot deaths and infant mortality.

313. Birth control and family planning guidance are available from the mother and child health stations and the health centres and doctor's surgeries that are part of the municipal health services. Information aimed at adolescents is provided through various channels, such as schools, leisure activities for adolescents, public campaigns, brochures, information booklets, etc. The Norwegian population is generally well informed about birth control.

314. Since the Act relating to the Termination of Pregnancy entered into force in 1979, the Directorate of Health has had the main responsibility for monitoring the abortion figures and for giving advice and professional opinions concerning the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. The main emphasis has been on concrete measures in relation to adolescents, and on information, education and consultation activities for key personnel who are in contact with adolescents.

315. The abortion figures have been stable since the Act relating to the Termination of Pregnancy entered into force. In 1991, 15,528 abortions were performed, i.e. 14.6 abortions per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 49. The highest abortion figures are found in the group between the ages of 20 to 24 (28.9 per 1,000 women). In 1991, abortions were performed on 19 of 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19, and this was the lowest figure ever recorded since the Act relating to the Termination of Pregnancy entered into force. There is, however, some concern about the abortion figures for the very youngest, one reason being that there are many more pregnancies ending in abortion in this age group than in any other group. The Directorate of Health has therefore drafted a plan of action to prevent unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

316. The plans of action will also emphasize knowledge of birth control and information campaigns. The latter involves finding methods that can increase the preparedness of adolescents for coping with certain situations, and improving their communication skills at the same time as specific birth control skills are provided. The danger of infection by sexually transmitted diseases and HIV has sharpened the focus on the importance of using condoms as contraceptives.

317. It is necessary to intensify the testing of methods adapted to the social and cultural affiliations of the various target groups. Special campaigns and methods will be developed for boys. Surveys show that boys take more sexual risks and have poorer knowledge of their own body and sexuality than girls. Projects and measures will be implemented in relation to the age group 13 to 15, aimed at enhancing their knowledge of their sexuality and enabling them to make certain choices. Efforts will also be aimed at adolescent groups who engage in high-risk behaviour.

318. Efforts will be made to improve the coordination measures to prevent unwanted pregnancies, and infection by HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

319. At some health stations, in sections of Oslo for example, separate stations for adolescents have been established which offer free medical assistance and consultations. The question of birth control is an important aspect of these activities.

320. Traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children are not a part of Norwegian culture. With an increasing number of immigrants, attention has been brought to the problems concerning circumcision of girls. It is not known whether this is practised in Norway at the present time. The circumcision of girls is punishable pursuant to the provisions of the Penal Code pertaining to bodily harm.

321. The health and living conditions of children are a central part of Norwegian development aid policy for developing countries. According to this policy, at least 10 per cent of Norwegian development aid is to be earmarked for health care, care of mother and child, and family planning. This objective has generally been achieved. Most of the contributions are channelled through international organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and IPPF. Norway places special emphasis on the development of primary health services and services aimed at mothers and children.

322. The objective of development aid for children is to improve the living conditions and environment in which children are raised. The measures are aimed at children or are of special importance to children. In 1992, such measures represented 12 per cent of Norwegian development aid. These measures encompassed primary education and regional development programmes, in addition to child vaccination and family health programmes.

323. Development aid for women is also an important part of Norwegian development aid. Women are an important target group for aid with regard to the development of health and education services. It is of paramount importance that education and primary health services are made available to girls and women. Part of the reason is that women who are malnourished, overworked and in poor health may bear underdeveloped children. Emphasis is also placed on the promotion of breast-feeding in order to counteract irresponsible advertising of infant formulas.

324. Norway has taken the initiative to establish an international child research network, Childwatch International. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was an important point of departure for this action. One of the objectives of the organization is to help politicians and planners make well-founded decisions and evaluate decisions and measures. This will be of great significance for our ability to follow up the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Effective channels for international cooperation and the build-up of child research will be established through Childwatch International. An important aspect of this work is to increase research capacity in developing countries and to ensure an effective flow of information on child research between the North and South.

325. Childwatch International was founded in Oslo on 29 January 1993, and Mr. Ferran Casas, the Director of the Spanish Centro de Estudos del Menor, was elected as head of the organization. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs provides financial support.

326. The objective of the plan of action for mental health (1991-1995) is to contribute to the development of suitable programmes for persons with mental disorders, to strengthen programmes that function well and to prevent mental disorders. At present there are great geographical differences with regard to the distribution of these programmes, and there are fewer programmes for children and adolescents than adults. In order to remedy the uneven geographical distribution in the treatment programmes, it has been decided to establish psychiatric centres for children and adolescents in certain regions. The objective is to ensure a professionally sound resource base in connection with regional hospitals and universities.

327. There is concern about the increase in the number of suicides, especially among young men and boys, in connection with preventive measures within mental health care. In 1990, 27 boys between the ages of 15 and 19 committed suicide. There is a need for better follow-up of young patients with mental disorders and persons who have attempted suicide, and this is a priority area in the national programme for the prevention of suicide, which was drawn up by the Directorate of Health in 1992. In this programme, emphasis is placed on providing assistance in coping with certain crises in life. Based on the national programme proposed by the Directorate of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs is working on a plan of action (1993) for the prevention of

suicide, and for giving priority to and implementing the measures proposed in the national programme. The municipal health services and psychiatric services will be involved.

328. Because of easy access to the natural environment, there are a great deal of outdoor activities available in Norway. This helps improve the general health of the population. Measures against pollution and other environmental problems are important in connection with the prevention of health problems. The health and well-being of the population are affected by the damage caused by air pollution in cities and towns. Sample surveys and analyses show that 7 per cent of the population is exposed to a concentration of pollutants above the accepted limits. Noise, especially from road and air traffic, also causes problems in connection with the health and well-being of the population. Around 6 per cent of the population is exposed to such a high level of traffic noise that it must be assumed that this is a problem.

329. Allergies and allergy-related symptoms appear to be increasing among children and adolescents. Around one third of Norway's population suffers from some kind of allergy, and this is a serious problem for 5 per cent of the population. The Directorate of Health has drafted a plan of action for children and adolescents with allergies or oversensitivity, asthma and other chronic lung diseases. Allergy symptoms are related to various types of environmental and pollution problems, and one important factor in this connection is indoor climate. In countries like Norway, where low temperatures during a large part of the year mean that people spend a great deal of time indoors and that the houses are well insulated, indoor climate is an important concern. The indoor climate is especially important for children in nursery schools, schools and recreation centres.

330. Provisions containing guidelines and restrictions on indoor climate will be incorporated into the Building Act due to these factors. A plan of action has also been drafted to improve the indoor climate in nursery schools and other schools. Indoor climate problems will be studied and advice and information will be provided. In accordance with this plan of action the Directorate of Health is drafting regulations concerning environmentally oriented health care in nursery schools and other schools, and has proposed standards for the quality of indoor air, which will stipulate criteria for the indoor climate.

D. Social security and child care services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18.3)

331. A child's right to social security benefits (art. 26) is primarily connected to child benefits, to which all children are entitled; but there is also other government support available to parents in order to enhance their ability to take care of their children.

332. Pursuant to the Act relating to Child Benefits, anyone who supports a child under the age of 16 and resides in Norway is entitled to child benefits.

In 1992, the ordinary annual child benefit rates, depending on the number of children entitled to benefits in the family, were:

1 child	NOK 10,212
2 children	NOK 20,916
3 children	NOK 33,036
4 children	NOK 45,780
For each additional child:	NOK 13,128

Child benefits are not taxable income.

333. Single parents are entitled to supplementary benefits. This implies that benefits for one child more than the actual number of children are provided. To be eligible, one or both of the parents must be deceased, the parents must be separated or divorced, or the parents must be unmarried and not living together. Supplementary benefits lapse if the single parent marries, even if the single parent does not marry the child's father or mother.

334. A supplement to the ordinary rates is applicable to children under the age of three. This infant supplement was introduced in 1991 and amounted to NOK 3,144. In 1992, the supplement was raised to NOK 4,380 per year, and in 1993, the rate is NOK 5,040.

335. Since 1989, recipients of child benefits residing in the county of Finnmark and certain municipalities in the county of Nord-Troms received a child benefit supplement for each child. This is an attempt to maintain the population in our northernmost districts. In 1992, this supplement amounted to NOK 3,732 for each child.

336. Child benefit expenses in 1992 were approximately NOK 11 billion. There has been a real increase in child benefits for several years. The benefits increased by NOK 804 per child from 1991 to 1992. On the average, the total child benefits received by a family increased by 8.3 per cent from 1991 to 1992. During the same time period the inflation rate was around 2.3 per cent.

337. As of 31 December 1991, there were 878,505 children and 507,540 other recipients entitled to benefits. In 1992, it was estimated that there was an average of 885,900 children entitled to benefits for the year.

338. Regulations have been issued pursuant to the Child Benefits Act pertaining to the right to child benefits for children who are not brought up by their parents or adoptive parents. The regulations stipulate that the child benefits for children who are in institutions for at least six months shall be paid to the institution. For children living in foster homes, the benefits shall be paid to the foster parents.

339. In order to be eligible for child benefits, a child must remain in the country for at least 12 months. For the children of asylum seekers or refugees, this applies from the day a decision is made to grant asylum or a residence permit on some other basis.

340. A child who will be living abroad for more than 12 months is not considered a resident of the country, and the benefits will stop the month after the child leaves the country. Exceptions to this rule may apply if the

child's provider lives abroad in order to pursue certain types of work or studies, or if it is deemed reasonable to make an exception for other special reasons.

341. Parental leaves in connection with the birth (or adoption) of a child have been extended considerably in recent years. In 1986, the period of leave was 18 weeks with full compensation for lost wages; in 1992, it was 35 weeks, or 44 weeks and two days with 80 per cent compensation for lost wages. As of 1 April 1993, the period of leave was extended to 42 weeks with 100 per cent compensation, or 52 weeks with 80 per cent compensation. Three of these weeks must be used by the mother before the birth of the child, otherwise the right to these weeks lapses. There are also lump-sum benefits for women without any leave entitlement who give birth. In 1990, these benefits amounted to NOK 8,750; and in 1992, they were NOK 14,825. As of 1 April 1993, these benefits amount to NOK 17,790.

342. Four weeks of the new extended leave programme may be used exclusively by the father of the child. The Government wishes to give parents a better opportunity to combine leaves and paid work, and it must be possible to divide leaves between the parents in a manner which is more flexible than has previously been possible. The Government has therefore commissioned a study of a "time account model", which encompasses various means of utilizing some of the weeks of leave for reduced working hours for one or both of the parents.

343. In the case of adopting children under the age of 15, approximately the same rules apply as with maternity leave. As of 1 April 1993, the period of leave is 37 weeks with 100 per cent compensation, or 46 weeks with 80 per cent compensation.

344. Leave with pay is also granted when a child is ill. An employee who is away from work due to the necessary care of an ill child under the age of 12 is entitled to a daily cash allowance for up to 10 days every year, and 15 days per year if the individual has three or more children (30 days for single parents). Single parents are entitled to such payments for up to 20 days per calender year. In the case of disabled or chronically ill children under the age of 16, the period for paid parental leave is extended to 20 days per year (40 days for single parents). In the event that a child under the age of 16 suffers from a serious or potentially fatal illness, the parents are entitled to a one-year leave of absence (260 days) with full pay, and an additional two years with 65 per cent compensation for lost wages. There is no upper age limit with regard to mentally disabled children.

345. Parents are entitled to sick pay during the period they are together with their children at an approved health institution for the purpose of providing appropriate care for handicapped children or children with long-term illnesses. The same applies to approved adjustment training courses when the parents participate together with their vision-impaired, deaf or hearing-impaired child.

346. Transitional benefits for single, divorced or separated parents in 1992 were NOK 58,584 per year. The youngest child must be under the age of 10. A condition for eligibility is that the recipient has no income or an income that is under a set minimum level. It is possible to combine income with a

lower transition benefit in the event of an income over this level. Educational support is also available to single parents, and single parents are also eligible for support for child supervision if they engage in paid work or an educational programme.

347. The municipal social welfare services offer assistance on the basis of need. Of all the families with children that receive assistance, single parents represent the largest group, and especially those who are receiving transitional benefits. In addition to ordinary social welfare assistance, municipal housing allowances are available.

348. The supervision and care of children while their parents are at work takes place in private or public nursery schools, through private professional babysitters, or in family nursery schools (this applies primarily to children up to the age of three). In addition, there are extra-curricular programmes at school (after-school programmes) for pupils in grades one through six (cf. chapter VII).

349. In 1991, there were approximately 155,500 children in nursery schools in Norway. During the 1980s, the number of nursery schools almost doubled. Around 39 per cent of all children under the age of seven were thus provided with a place in a nursery school in 1991. The nursery school coverage is best for the older preschool children. Coverage for six-year-olds was 78 per cent in 1991, and for five-year-olds, 65 per cent. For children under the age of one, the coverage was only 1.8 per cent in 1991. The 1991 Living Conditions Survey showed that 20 per cent of all children between the ages of 0 and 3 were in a nursery school, and approximately 27 per cent were under private supervision. The corresponding figures for those between the ages of 4 and 6 were 54 and 9 per cent, respectively.

350. The number of nursery school places at the end of 1992 was 17,953. The number of places in nursery schools has increased by nearly 35,000 over the last two years.

351. Efforts are still being made to increase the number of private and municipal nursery schools. In recent years, there has been a tendency towards a greater number of private nursery schools. In 1991, 44 per cent of the nursery schools were private. The central Government provides grants to both types of (duly approved) nursery schools.

352. The Government views nursery schools as providing a valuable opportunity for most children - regardless of their need for care. This applies especially to children over the age of two or three. The Government aims to provide all families seeking a nursery school place with a place in the course of the 1990s.

353. Nursery schools provide both care and education. Nursery schools are an important resource in the everyday life of most children, with regard to their education and as a safe arena for socialization. Most of the children in nursery schools are there because their parents work outside the home. Regardless of the need for supervision, many people would like a place in a nursery school because it offers a safe place for their children to play together with other children - and the nursery school provides an educational and social stimulus. The nursery school programme is regulated by law. The

objective of the Nursery School Act is to ensure that children are provided with favourable opportunities for development and activity in close cooperation with the child's home. The Nursery School Act stipulates that nursery schools must have facilities and outdoor areas that are suitable considering the children's age and the amount of time they spend there.

354. At present there are different grant and other assistance programmes that safeguard the special needs and interests of various groups. In connection with this we can mention, for example, nursery school places for refugee children and the children of people who have been granted residence for humanitarian reasons, language training grants for foreign language children (including Sami children in nursery schools that are not based on the Sami language and culture), and special grants to nursery schools with Sami as their main language, in addition to ordinary central government grants.

355. During the latter half of the 1990s, many places will be released in the nursery schools when six-year-olds are integrated into the school system. In order to achieve the objective of full nursery school coverage before the end of this century it is, however, still necessary to employ other measures. The most important factor is to maintain the high level of central government grants to this programme. At present, central government grants cover about one third of the costs of nursery schools. The rest is covered by contributions from parents and municipal grants. In addition, special governmental grants were given in 1991 and 1992.

356. The Nursery School Act is currently under revision. The intention is to make the nursery schools more flexible and better adapted to the needs of families.

E. Standard of living (art. 27, 1-3)

357. The parents' responsibility to secure the conditions of living necessary for the development of the child (cf. art. 27.2) is discussed in chapter V under the section on parental responsibility. Society's obligation to provide assistance and programmes (cf. para. 3 of art. 27) is discussed several places in this report, for example, in the paragraphs above on national insurance, child benefits, parental leave and nursery schools. In this section, some of the indicators associated with the living conditions for children and families with children will be discussed, in addition to certain considerations that are addressed and studies that are commissioned by the authorities in order to improve the living conditions of families with children.

358. In general, children in Norway have a high standard of living. There are statutory rights that safeguard the child, the child's parents or others who care for the child, and ensure that the assistance required to maintain the conditions of living necessary for the development of the child is provided.

359. Living condition surveys are made at regular intervals in order to determine the standard of living of the population. One of the areas that is studied is the housing standard, which is one of several indicators of the living conditions of families with children. The average size of Norwegian dwellings is 110 square metres and 95 per cent of the dwellings have a bathroom or shower and toilet facilities. There are, however, differences among families with children and differences between families with children

and others. The 1991 Living Conditions Survey showed that 21 per cent of all single parents lived in an out-of-date dwelling or under cramped conditions, as opposed to 16 per cent of the total population.

360. The primary objective of Norwegian housing policy is that everyone should be able to have an adequate dwelling in a good residential area. Loans and grants from the Norwegian State Housing Bank are important in this connection as they aim especially at supporting the disabled, immigrants and young people who are getting established. In order to reduce running housing expenses, the Norwegian State Housing Bank can provide establishment grants and housing allowances. Housing allowances are granted to households that have a combination of high housing expenses and low income. The financing offered by the Norwegian State Housing Bank to, for example, cooperatives and private developers is granted on the basis of certain criteria, one of the purposes of which is to improve the quality of housing. One objective is to design the housing environments in such a manner that they provide an opportunity to choose among various social and physical activities and provide for the safety of the residents regardless of age. The activities of the Norwegian State Housing Bank are generally of direct and indirect significance for the child's early years and well-being.

361. In addition to the living condition surveys, there are annual income and asset surveys in which the income development of different types of households per unit of consumption is studied. Disposable real income is a typical unit of measure used in these surveys. Taxes and interest payments are deducted, and investment income, social security benefits, housing allowances and grants are included. For families with children, disposable income per unit of consumption was NOK 92,791 in 1990. For families with children under the age of 7, disposable income per unit of consumption was lower than the average for all households; but families with children between the ages of 7 and 19 were shown to have an average income. However, families with children experienced a strong growth in disposable real income per unit of consumption in the period 1982 to 1990. For families with children between the ages of 0 and 6, the increase in disposable real income per unit of consumption was 18 per cent in the period 1982 to 1990; and for families with children between the ages of 7 and 19, the increase was 8 per cent. For single parents, the increase in disposable real income per unit of consumption was only 3 per cent during the same period. It is primarily the increase in working women that has resulted in higher income for families with children. The increase in the number of nursery schools has contributed to making it possible for more women to work.

362. Even though families with children have on the whole showed a favourable income development, there are differences among the various families with children. It is primarily the opportunity to work and have an independent income which is the decisive factor. Allocations to families with children, such as child benefits and transitional benefits for single parents, in addition to unemployment benefits and, for example, educational grants for single parents all contribute to providing families with children having a low or no income with a financial basis.

VII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

A. Education (art. 28)

363. The Norwegian school system is undergoing a major reform, including the introduction of extra-curricular activities at schools, educational programmes for six-year-olds, the right to upper secondary education for all adolescents between 16 and 19 and closer academic and educational coordination between the various fields.

364. Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory, and all children are entitled to a primary and lower secondary education free of charge. The municipalities have the overall responsibility for providing such education to all children.

365. Children are required to attend school for nine years. They start the year they attain the age of seven. The school is divided into a primary level, first to sixth grade (age 7 to 13) and a lower secondary level, grades 7 to 9 (age 14 to 16). There is also an optional tenth year.

366. The Government has decided to lower the age at which children start school to six years of age and aims at extending primary and lower secondary school to 10 years.

367. The Ministry is obliged to prepare a master plan for the primary and secondary education school according to the Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education. The plan specifies among other things the school's educational objectives and academic content, but it also makes provision for adaptation of the programme at the local level. Before six-year-olds can be integrated into the school, revised curriculums must be prepared for the master plan. This is also important with a view to the increased degree of internationalization in society and the role of the school in this connection. There is, among other things, a need to strengthen education in foreign languages in the schools.

368. The vast majority of Norwegian children attend public schools. The Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act authorizes the establishment of private schools, and central government grants are offered to such schools pursuant to the Act relating to Private Schools. There are, however, relatively few private schools in Norway.

369. The Act relating to Primary and Lower Secondary Schools lays down certain principles concerning the organization of the public primary and lower secondary schools, standards for school buildings, teacher qualifications and the main guidelines for the school's curriculum.

370. Upper secondary education is free and non-compulsory.

371. In 1992, the Storting decided that all adolescents between the ages of 16 and 19 shall have a statutory right to an upper secondary education, which enters into force in 1994. Some of the key elements are:

(a) The statutory right of adolescents between the ages of 16 and 19 to three years of upper secondary education shall apply to an educational programme leading to qualification for higher education, a trade certificate or completion of other upper secondary education.

(b) These adolescents will be entitled to admission to one of a maximum of three foundation courses to which they have given priority.

(c) The counties will have a statutory obligation to honour this right and ensure that there are a sufficient number of places. The county municipalities will be required to follow up adolescents who do not have work or a place in a school.

372. The counties are responsible for preparing plans for the upper secondary education programme in their respective areas. (The aim of this planning is to meet the demand for places in the upper secondary school, including the demand for short-term courses and part-time education programmes. For particular areas of study, consideration must also be given to existing opportunities for employment in the various occupations.) The planning must also aim to meet the educational needs of prisons, and social and medical institutions, in addition to meeting the educational needs of the disabled.

373. The central authorities have provided extra grants for additional places in the schools for several years, so that the counties could offer places to as many applicants as possible. The counties have aimed at offering places to as many pupils as possible in the age group 16 to 19 years, but there have been some capacity problems, resulting in the rejection of applicants to advanced courses (courses after the first year) in vocational branches. This situation will change after implementation of the reform in 1994.

374. In the autumn of 1991, 85 per cent of all adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18 attended upper secondary schools. The percentages varied from county to county, but the most urban counties did not have the highest percentage of pupils in upper secondary schools. Certain counties in western Norway had the highest percentages, i.e. 87 to 89. The northernmost county, Finnmark, had the lowest percentage, 74 per cent, and Oslo had 77 per cent. Of all the pupils encompassed by the Act relating to Upper Secondary Education, 41 per cent were in general study branches and 24 per cent were in commercial study branches. This means that 65 per cent were in branches qualifying for higher education. Of all of the pupils in the upper secondary school, 49 per cent were girls. The greatest percentage of girls was in the branches qualifying for higher education, approximately 56 per cent.

375. The capacity problems of the upper secondary schools have been aggravated by the shortage of apprenticeships at commercial enterprises. Models will be developed for improved coordination between training in school and at commercial enterprises. The upper secondary school will offer 13 foundation courses covering a broad range of subjects and trades. Specialization will be offered through advanced courses I and II (second and third year of training) or as training at a commercial enterprise.

376. For trades encompassed by the Act relating to Vocational Training, the principal model will be two years at school; the rest of the training will be carried out at commercial enterprises. If enough apprenticeships cannot be

provided at commercial enterprises, the counties shall - as an exceptional measure - offer specialization at school to qualify for a trade certificate through an advanced course II.

377. The Act relating to vocational training contains provisions concerning the rights and obligations of commercial enterprises and apprentices, qualifying examinations and training. The objective of the Act is to ensure that each individual apprentice develops trade skills and an understanding of and respect for the trade, the work involved and society.

378. New acts relating to upper secondary education and vocational training will be introduced pursuant to the new right to an upper secondary education and the new structure that has been prescribed by the Storting. According to the proposal for a new act relating to vocational training, the act will still apply to training programmes qualifying for a trade that take place at commercial enterprises by means of a contract between the enterprise and the apprentice. However, the scope of the act will be more detailed at the same time as it will be expanded and adapted to the upper secondary education reform.

379. Each county has a vocational training board that administers the programme. Commercial enterprises may not be ordered to accept apprentices under the Act relating to Vocational Training.

380. Norway has a very large number of students engaged in higher education. In the autumn of 1992, there were approximately 150,000 students attending regional colleges and universities, which means that the number of students has increased by about 50 per cent during the last five years.

381. The students are relatively "old". In the autumn of 1991, 54.5 per cent of the students were in the age group 19 to 24, and 45.5 per cent were in the age group 25 to 30 or older.

382. The State Educational Loan Fund is required to offer all students and pupils the opportunity to finance their education regardless of their parents' income. Some financial aid is given in the form of a grant; other aid is given in the form of a loan with highly subsidized interest. For students over the set age-limit (19 years), need is assessed on the basis of their own income; for pupils below this age-limit, need is assessed on the basis of their parents' income. The educational financial aid programme is under evaluation and revision. One of the aims is to improve progression. Improved progression will, among other things, make it easier for the youngest students to find a place in an education programme. The admission rules have been changed with a view to making it easier for the youngest applicants to be accepted. A special "youth quota" that was introduced in 1992 has increased the percentage of those under age 22 who are admitted.

383. Information and guidance concerning upper secondary education is provided at the primary and lower secondary level. This is accomplished through specially appointed counsellors, in addition to the general teaching staff. County education committees issue catalogues listing all of the county's educational programmes and providing information about application procedures, etc. The upper secondary schools also have a guidance service that provides guidance and advice in connection with occupational and educational decisions.

384. Special classes must be arranged for children who, in the opinion of experts, need special assistance. According to the Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education the municipalities shall provide children under compulsory school age with the appropriate educational assistance when deemed necessary by the experts.

385. The responsibility for educating children with special needs has been transferred to the municipalities and counties, based on the principle that the weakest are entitled to an education in the municipality where they live. Municipal or inter-municipal school psychology services have been established as expert bodies which evaluate various types of special education.

386. National and regional competence centres have been established to assist and advise the teaching staff, parents and pupils, in addition to carrying out research and development in the field of special education.

387. In the upper secondary school, adapted courses of education must be provided, possibly for more than three years, if considered necessary by the experts concerned. If a pupil has difficulties following a particular educational programme, then the county shall provide the pupil with another programme.

388. The master plan for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education stipulates that "our education programmes shall be based on a philosophy that all human beings are equal and have inherent human dignity". Physical punishment is prohibited, and humiliating treatment that violates an individual's integrity or dignity is not allowed. The educational programme must be adapted to the capacity and qualifications of the individual, but there shall be no division of pupils according to their ability or aptitude.

389. The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and the World Summit for children in New York in 1990 pointed out clear objectives within the education sector; for example, 80 per cent of all children shall be provided with a primary education and adult illiteracy shall be reduced by 50 per cent before the year 2000. Development aid from industrial countries such as Norway is one of several important means of accomplishing this. Norwegian development aid places great emphasis on children and their need for, among other things, an eduction. The amount of development aid allocated for educational purposes has increased in recent years. In 1989, 7 per cent of all development aid was allocated to educational programmes. A great deal of this aid has been allocated through the national programmes of our development aid partners. Some of it has been channelled through international organizations, especially UNESCO and the World Bank, and private organizations. In accordance with the recommendation from the World Conference on Education for All, the Government is prepared to further increase aid for primary education through various channels. The greatest priority will be given to the situation of girls and women in developing countries. It is also important to contribute to strengthening the upper secondary school and vocational training in the developing countries in accordance with local conditions.

B. Aims of education (art. 29)

390. The school's responsibility for the dissemination of values and culture is defined in the master plan for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. This plan states, for example: "Our educational programmes shall be based on basic Christian and humanitarian values; they shall uphold and develop our cultural heritage. Our educational programmes shall promote equality between the sexes and solidarity, regardless of class or occupation."

391. Our educational programme shall contribute to enhancing the pupils' knowledge and understanding of basic Christian values, our national cultural heritage, our language, democratic ideas and scientific thought and methods. In addition, the programme shall promote equality and equal rights, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international solidarity. Our teaching programmes must be adapted to the qualifications and needs of the individual pupil.

392. The parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children. With the understanding and cooperation of the home, the primary and lower secondary school shall assist in giving the pupils a Christian, ethical upbringing, developing their mental and physical skills and providing them with sound general knowledge in order to make them independent citizens at home and in the community. The school shall promote intellectual freedom and tolerance, and emphasize the establishment of good forms of cooperation between the teachers and pupils and between the schools and the homes. Emphasis is placed on the rights of children and adolescents in the school's educational programme, and the pupils are given practical training in active participation and co-determination.

393. Our objective is to have a uniform national school providing equal education opportunities for all, and at the same time permit the individual municipalities to adapt their local education programmes in order to make the most of local resources and opportunities.

394. The upper secondary school shall prepare pupils for work and community life, provide them with a foundation for their further education, and help them with their personal development.

395. Environmental issues have become an important part of Norway's educational programme. Norway believes that it is important to ensure that the decision-makers of today and the future have the necessary competence in fields such as the environment and resource management.

396. One important task for the schools is to improve the pupils' knowledge of nature, what human beings are doing to nature and how we can contribute to sustainable development. The Ministry of Education and Research has developed a programme designed to provide all pupils with the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to implement the right measures at the right time.

397. Major projects have been implemented with regard to the environmental surveillance of the coast, lakes and rivers. An ecologically oriented teaching plan for environmental studies has been issued by the central authorities. Working groups have been established in every county for the

primary and lower secondary schools, and for the upper secondary schools. In addition, a systematic upgrading programme for environmental studies has been prepared for all teachers in Norway.

398. The Act relating to Equal Status stipulates that the public authorities shall establish the appropriate conditions for equal status. Men and women have the same right to an education, and the teaching aids used in schools and for other educational purposes shall be based on the principle of equality between the sexes.

399. The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs has an equal status secretariat set up to fulfil these requirements. The secretariat directs its efforts mainly towards school supervisors and teachers, providing them with information materials to help them guide the pupils in their choice of a profession. The secretariat also cooperates actively with authors and publishers of textbooks. Textbooks are reviewed on the basis of equality in connection with the approval process for these books.

C. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)

400. The implementation of cultural policy measures for children and adolescents is the responsibility of the counties and municipalities. This limits the central authorities' ability to influence programmes for children and adolescents. At the same time, it provides the local and regional authorities with a great deal of freedom.

401. The following are some requirements concerning areas for children and adolescents in the National Policy Guidelines laid down pursuant to the Planning and Building Act (also described in chapter III):

(a) Areas and facilities that are to be used by children and adolescents shall be protected against pollution, noise, traffic and other health hazards;

(b) Areas where the children can pursue their own interests and create their own play environment in the local environment shall be provided;

(c) The municipalities must set aside adequately large and suitable areas for nursery schools;

(d) When rezoning areas that were previously designated as free or open areas which were used for or were suitable for play activities, or areas that have been designated as common areas, a fully equivalent replacement must be provided.

402. Children and adolescents are the most active participants in cultural activities. More than 50 per cent of all children between 9 and 13 years of age take part in one or more cultural sectors. In the age group 14 to 19 years almost 50 per cent participate actively in one or more cultural sectors. Sports is the most popular form of activity. About three out of every four in the age group 7 to 15 years actively participate in an athletic club. There are a large number of children and youth organizations with a wide range of

activities in addition to sports. Slightly more than 20 per cent of all adolescents participate in choirs and music activities, which are the largest activity next to sports.

403. Nine of 10 adolescents between 14 and 15 years of age are or have been a member of a voluntary organization. These organizations are an important part of the cultural scene. Not all children take part in cultural activities as members of an organization. Three of four adolescents between 9 and 19 years of age use the library. More than 50 per cent visit a museum in the course of a year.

404. There are, however, social differences with regard to participation in cultural activities. Children of parents with a high level of education participate more often in cultural activities than children of parents with a low level of education. This may be due to varying geographical access to cultural activities, financial circumstances, or varying interests in the different social environments. The figures seem to show, however, that there is less of a difference among children with regard to activities such as museum visits and the use of the library. Such activities often take place in connection with school. The school is the most important cultural institution for children and adolescents, and it plays a major role in equalizing the differences in the cultural sector.

405. The Government uses many means to stimulate children and adolescents to greater participation in various cultural activities. The Norwegian Culture Fund, whose objective is to promote a creative environment in literature and the arts, and the Norwegian Council of Culture, which manages the fund, are important elements in this work. Children and adolescents are one of the priority areas of the Norwegian Council of Culture. The Council has, for example, developed models for art schools for children in cooperation with certain municipalities and implemented the experimental programme "Prøv selv" (Try it yourself), in which children are allowed to initiate and organize their own activities with the help of a grant from the central authorities.

406. Various measures have been implemented in the cultural and the media sectors, such as

(a) Radio and television broadcasting:

(i) There are special rules that regulate radio and television commercials in relation to children and adolescents. Norwegian law stipulates that it is prohibited to broadcast commercials in connection with children's programmes, or commercials that are especially intended for children;

(ii) The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) gives priority to the production and broadcasting of its own programmes for children and adolescents. The number of television and radio programmes for children and adolescents has increased in recent years;

(iii) The newly established TV2 shall transmit programmes for the general public, including programmes for specific categories of viewers such as children;

(iv) A third national radio station will be established in 1993. Children and adolescents will be a priority target group for radio;

(v) It is expected that a fourth, private national radio station will be on the air in the course of 1993. It will be required to broadcast programmes for children and adolescents;

(b) Children and films:

(i) Age-limits have been set for the public showing of films and videos (cf. chapter II);

(ii) Government grants are available for the production of children's films. On the average, five short films for children are produced every year. It is anticipated that five feature films for children will receive grants from the Government during the period from 1990 to 1994. Grants are also given for writing scripts for and importing children's films.

(iii) Some 350,000 children attend school performances every year. The School Film Committee cooperates with the Norwegian Cinema and Film Foundation for the purpose of integrating films into the extra-curricular supervision system (see below).

(iv) Under the direction of the National Film Board, a special information campaign has been implemented to increase children's and adolescents' awareness of their use of video films in particular. The aim is to achieve a level of awareness at which the children and adolescents themselves choose not to watch videos and films that depict excessive violence;

(v) The central government has its own children's film consultant, who works in cooperation with the National Association of Municipal Cinemas;

(c) Production and distribution of children's books:

(i) There is a special procurement programme for contemporary Norwegian children's literature. Every year around 100 titles are purchased and distributed to 1,500 libraries (1,000 public libraries and 500 school libraries);

(ii) Children and adolescents use libraries more frequently than any other age group. Books may be borrowed free of charge;

(iii) Government funds are available for illustrated children's books;

(iv) Three Norwegian and one Sami children's magazine receive funds from the Government;

(v) Funds are also granted for various projects whose purpose is to focus on literature for children and adolescents, to present Norwegian authors and contemporary Norwegian literature, and to stimulate children's use of the library;

(d) Music:

(i) NorConsert (the Norwegian Consert Institute) arranges school concerts throughout the country. In 1991, 4,787 school concerts were held in 439 municipalities and over 440,000 children attended. Concerts are also given for preschool children. NorConsert has also initiated a music project with immigrants as the target group;

(ii) Government funding is available for music workshops for adolescents;

(iii) Several choir and music organizations receive grants;

(iv) In 1991, about 300 municipalities had their own music school with a total of 58,000 pupils. In 1992, government funding for the programme amounted to approximately NOK 53 million;

(e) Museums: Norway has 530 museums, 340 of which receive government grants. Many children and adolescents visit these museums, often together with their class or nursery school group. Some of the museums have special educational programmes for school children;

(f) Theatre and opera:

(i) All of the government-supported theatres have performances for children and adolescents as part of their general repertoire;

(ii) A significant number of the performances given by the National Touring Theatre are intended for children and adolescents. In addition, the National Touring Theatre cooperates closely with many schools throughout the country and gives performances during the day;

(iii) Independent professional theatre groups receive annual grants. Many of the groups' performances are directed at children and adolescents;

(iv) The Norwegian Amateur Theatre Association is an umbrella organization for all amateur theatre in Norway and receives an annual grant from the Government. A substantial portion of these funds benefit children and adolescents in the form of contributions to member organizations, and practical assistance offered to amateur theatre groups and direction and courses;

(g) Graphic arts, handicrafts and design:

(i) Government grants are available to museums and organizations;

(ii) Making works of graphic art known to children and adolescents will be a priority area in the years to come;

(iii) The International Children's Art Museum was opened in Oslo in 1986 and has exhibited children's art from all over the world. The museum also arranges worldwide drawing contests that have been shown all over the world. The museum receives funding from the central Government.

407. Their activities of nursery schools, which are governed by statute, are designed to stimulate children's development. Although a great deal of emphasis is placed on play, many activities have an educational component.

408. The extra-curricular supervision system is a new development designed for young school children. At present, approximately 42,000 of the over 150,000 children in the first three grades of the primary school participate. It is estimated that there is a need for supervision after ordinary school hours for approximately 67,000 children in the first to third grades. It is the aim of the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs to meet the demand for extra-curricular supervision by 1995.

409. Recreation clubs include both junior clubs and youth clubs and encompass the age group from 10 to 18 years. There are between 600 and 1,000 clubs on a national basis. Most of the recreation clubs are operated by the municipalities on an independent basis or in connection with schools, but there are many private recreation clubs which are operated, for example, by an organization - usually with municipal grants. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs provides support for the establishment of recreation clubs and youth centres.

410. Many municipalities have supported and established youth centres or activity centres where the work of organizations and club activities are combined. These include youth culture centres which are run and operated by the adolescents themselves with financial assistance from the municipalities. In some municipalities, culture centres stressing multicultural activities have been established to bring Norwegians and immigrants from different countries together.

411. The situation of some children and adolescents in the major cities can be especially difficult as regards living conditions and leisure activities. In order to improve this situation, especially for vulnerable groups of children and adolescents, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs offers grants for programmes in the major cities. On the basis of the results from the various youth surveys and a study of the problems and numbers of adolescents adrift, the Ministry will prepare a strategy for and provide support to future efforts to help children and adolescents in the major cities.

412. The voluntary children's and youth organizations play a major role in relation to the central policy objectives for children and adolescents. The organizations represent a wide variety of activities and ideas. They are important as bearers and creators of culture; they are arenas for learning and exercising democracy; they are spokesmen for children and adolescents in relation to the adult world; they provide a framework for self-development and solidarity; and they are important transmitters of values.

413. Over 90 per cent of Norwegian children are or have been members of an organization. There is a large turnover, and membership may be short-lived. The total membership of organizations declined during the 1980s. In recent years there has been some consolidation. The shortage of well-trained leaders at the local level is one of the organizations' greatest problems. The organizations are especially weak in relation to immigrant children and adolescents, and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs stresses the importance of supporting the work of the organizations to improve the recruitment of immigrant children and adolescents.

414. The national voluntary children's and youth organizations receive support for operation of their central offices from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. New youth movements and small organizations that are not encompassed by the general guidelines may also receive support. In total, organizations entitled to such grants have over 600,000 members under the age of 25.

415. The Ministry has revised its guidelines for grants, and will give greater priority to independent organizations for children and adolescents that also promote active participation from the members themselves, and give all members over the age of 15 an equal say in the organization.

416. Organized sports for children and adolescents are also very popular. Studies show that three of four Norwegian children regularly participate in sports activities. More than 50 per cent of all Norwegian children and adolescents under the age of 17 participate in organized sports. The form of activity varies with age. It appears that organized activity declines with increasing age, but the level of physical activity remains the same.

417. The Norwegian Sports Federation has prepared its own guidelines for children's sports. These encompass all activities for children up to the age of 12. They require a great deal of all-round activity and restrict competitions for the youngest ages groups. All the individual sports associations are bound by these guidelines.

418. Norway has a rich and varied landscape. Most children in Norway live in areas where the natural surroundings are - or can be - an arena for play and exploration. In Norway, everyone is entitled to free access to forests and uncultivated land, and with certain exceptions, may pick berries, mushrooms, wild flowers, etc.

419. In recent years, a growing effort has been made to safeguard the natural environment and opportunities for outdoor recreation in densely populated areas, in order to prevent alienation from nature among children and adolescents and to ensure that they enjoy a satisfactory quality of life during their formative years.

420. The authorities and private organizations are organizing development projects for nursery schools, schools and the extra-curricular supervision system. The express purpose of these is to improve the opportunities for children and adolescents to experience their natural surroundings, and to provide them with knowledge of ecology and cultural history. Many nursery school projects dealing with outdoor recreation and natural history have been organized. Relevant optional subjects and environmental studies projects have been introduced in schools and extra-curricular activities in an attempt to incorporate outdoor recreation and an understanding of nature and the environment into the educational system.

421. 1993 has been designated as "Outdoor Recreation Year". Outdoor recreation organizations have taken the initiative and the Government is supporting both the planning and implementation. Outdoor recreation provides a sound foundation for concern about the environment, better health, a better quality of life and sustainable development.

VIII. SPECIAL PROTECTIVE MEASURES

A. Children in emergency situations (arts. 22, 38, 39)

422. Children who seek asylum themselves or arrive together with asylum seekers stay in State reception centres while their applications are processed. In 1989, the centres housed a total of 5,484 asylum seekers and transfer refugees, including 1,683 children. In 1990, the total number housed was 4,935, including 1,438 children and 156 unaccompanied minors under the age of 18. In 1991, the total figure was 5,683, including children, and 244 unaccompanied minors under the age of 18.

423. At every State reception centre one of the staff must be given special responsibility for identifying and following up the needs of the children (in this centre). Each centre should have an activity programme for children of all ages, designed to improve their well-being, contribute to the development of their skills, improve their self-esteem and provide suitable conditions for learning.

424. Children of school age are entitled to an education. Pursuant to the Act relating to the Primary and Lower Secondary School, a child has a right to schooling after three months' residence in Norway. This right applies from the first day in the country if there is reason to believe that the child will remain in Norway for more than three months.

425. Once they have received residence permits, asylum seekers and refugees take up residence in various municipalities. They are assisted in finding a place to live, but are themselves responsible for interest payments and repayment of any loans they may take up. Employment is hard to find at present, and many people are dependent on social welfare.

426. Children with refugee status in Norway have on application the right to be reunited with their families in this country (cf. section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1988).

427. In Norway, plans for the reception of minors seeking asylum without their parents or others with parental responsibility were adopted by the Government

in 1989. Minors seeking asylum are defined as persons under the age of 18 without their parents or others with parental responsibility in Norway. The plans are based on the adaptation of measures for this group of persons to the needs of the individual, and to the objectives and principles of the Norwegian immigration policy.

428. Applications from unaccompanied minors seeking asylum are treated in the same way as other applications. However, minors are not to be repatriated unless there are parents or others who can care for them in their home country. Measures in the plan are aimed at:

(a) Prompt treatment of applications for asylum;

(b) Questioning in a reassuring atmosphere;

(c) Short stays in reception centres designed especially for this group;

(d) Early settlement in municipalities;

(e) Protecting the interests and rights of the individual, for example, in connection with questions pertaining to guardians and child welfare measures;

(f) Guidance to municipalities concerning the reception of this group;

(g) Vocational training for unaccompanied minors who do not come under the ordinary education system.

In addition, there are guidelines for the guardians of unaccompanied minors who seek asylum, as part of the effort to protect children's rights.

429. In Norway, there are a number of refugee children who have fled their countries because of war and therefore need special protection and care. A special psychosocial centre for refugees has been established as part of the University of Oslo. The centre offers instruction in child psychiatry and is also involved in the treatment of victims of torture, etc. In 1993, the centre will receive extra funds for the development of competence in connection with refugee children. Child psychiatry and the municipal school psychology services are engaged in locating and treating children who have been injured in war.

B. Children in conflict with the law (arts. 40, 39)

430. According to section 46 of the General Civil Penal Code of 22 May 1902 No. 10 no person may be punished for any criminal act committed before attaining 15 years of age. The police may, however, investigate criminal actions committed by children under 15 years of age. If other than minor offences are involved, the police must inform the child welfare services at once. The child welfare services may then implement measures to help the child.

431. Even though guilt is deemed to be proven, a prosecution may be waived provided that such special circumstances exist that the prosecuting authority

on an overall evaluation finds that there are stronger reasons for not prosecuting the act. One example of "special circumstances" is that the offender is young. Such a waiver of prosecution may also be made conditional upon various conditions specified in section 69 of the Criminal Procedure Act, for example, that the person charged does not commit any new offence during the period of probation.

432. Criminal proceedings against persons between 15 and 18 years of age are dealt with by the ordinary courts, and the general rules of the Criminal Procedure Act of 1981 and the Prosecution Instructions apply. There are, however, certain special rules for this group of criminals:

(a) The legal guardian has party rights in addition to the adolescent himself. The legal guardian has the decisive word in the choice of defence counsel, but must nevertheless attach importance to the views of the adolescent. If the legal guardian cannot or is unwilling to look after the accused's interests in the case, a provisional guardian shall be appointed. The legal guardian should normally be given an opportunity to be present during the examination and to express his views, for example, in connection with the choice of defence counsel;

(b) The police must immediately notify the child welfare services when an investigation is initiated. The child welfare services shall if possible be notified of the time when the suspect is to be interviewed, and at their request be given the opportunity to be present and to express their views, before any decision is made with regard to indictment;

(c) Persons under 18 years of age should not be arrested or remanded in custody unless special circumstances so warrant.

433. The following is a list of Norwegian provisions that ensure fulfilment of the conditions for criminal procedures set out in the second paragraph of article 40:

(a) Paragraph 2 a: pursuant to article 97 of the Constitution no act may be given retroactive effect. No person may be punished for an act that was not prohibited at the time the act was committed;

(b) Paragraph 2 b i: the assumption of innocence is recognized in Norwegian law. The burden of proof of the defendant's guilt lies with the prosecuting authority;

(c) Paragraph 2 b ii:

(i) Before a person charged is interviewed, he shall be informed of the charge and told that he is not obliged to make a statement. He shall also be informed of the right to have a defence counsel of his own choice at every stage of the case;

(ii) According to the Criminal Procedure Act, the defendant must be given the time and facilities necessary to prepare his defence. He has the right to consult his defence counsel before the court deals with the question of a remand in custody. A person remanded in custody has the right to

unrestricted written and oral communication with his defence counsel. The principle of hearing both sides of a case is recognized in Norwegian law;

(d) Paragraph 2 b iii:

(i) According to section 226 of the Criminal Procedure Act the investigation shall be carried out as rapidly as possible. According to section 249 of the said Act, the question of preferring an indictment shall be decided as soon as the case is sufficiently prepared for this purpose. The court shall, as soon as possible after the case comes before it, fix the time and place for the main hearing. The main hearing in the District Court or City Court shall as a general rule be scheduled not later than two weeks after the case comes before the court;

(ii) The authorities have clear objectives with regard to the duration of trials in criminal cases. The average time used to hear a case should not exceed one to two months at the court of first instance. The objective concerning appeals is that a sentence should be pronounced within six months. Special measures have been implemented to improve the situation in courts where this objective has not been met;

(iii) The Constitution is based on the principle of separation of powers into the executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The courts may therefore exercise their judicial power independently;

(iv) In order to ensure the independence of the courts, judges must also have a certain degree of personal independence. Norwegian constitutional law recognizes that judges are lifetime government officials who can only be removed from office by a court order;

(v) The defendant shall as a rule be present during the main hearing;

(vi) The accused is entitled to have the assistance of a defence counsel at all stages of the case. During the main hearing he shall, with a few limited exceptions, always have a defence counsel. The court shall therefore appoint a public defender for the accused. If the accused has expressed interest in a particular defence counsel, this counsel is usually appointed. Public defenders are paid by the central Government;

(e) Paragraph 2 b iv:

(i) The first time the accused attends the court, he shall be informed that he is not obliged to make a statement;

(ii) The defendant's right to present evidence, including the calling of witnesses, is regulated by the Criminal Procedure Act. It also follows from the unwritten principle of hearing both sides of a case, that he has the right to interview or have witnesses of the defence or prosecuting authority, interviewed.

(f) Paragraph 2 b v: Norway does not provide access to a legal review of the question of guilt in all criminal cases, and thus has had to make a reservation with regard to this provision. An account of this is given in chapter I;

(g) Paragraph 2 b vi: if the defendant does not understand or speak Norwegian, the court appoints an interpreter at the Government's expense.

(h) Paragraph 2 b vii: court hearings are as a general rule open to the public. When the accused is under 18 years of age, the court may nevertheless decide that the hearing is to be held behind closed doors.

434. As an alternative to punishment and proceedings in the ordinary courts, mediation boards have been introduced. This provides a means of resolving disputes outside the formal judicial system. This is a measure especially applicable to minors (cf. section 3 of art. 40). If the prosecuting authority finds the case suitable for mediation, the case can be transferred to a mediation board, provided that both parties agree. If the accused is under 18 years of age, the legal guardians must also agree. The mediator must bring the parties together at a mediation meeting at the earliest possible opportunity. The objective of this meeting is to reach an agreement, which may entail the payment of compensation by the person against whom the complaint was lodged, either in the form of a financial settlement or in the form of work. The mediator must approve the agreement. This programme is primarily intended for young offenders, but there is no maximum age limit. If mediation does not lead to an agreement, or if the agreement is significantly breached, the prosecuting authority can once again institute criminal proceedings.

435. When adolescents are given a suspended sentence, their prosecution is waived or they are released on probation, they come under the supervision of the Probation and Aftercare Service. The Service's supervisory programmes involve, for example, the establishment of cooperation between several services, such as the school and social welfare office, in order to coordinate measures for the adolescent.

436. Adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years who commit criminal acts may be deprived of their liberty and placed in Norwegian prisons if the other conditions for imprisonment are fulfilled. In 1991, on the average, one adolescent aged 15 years and 13 adolescents aged 16-17 years were imprisoned in Norway. These figures are, however, not very high when we take into account the growth of crime among adolescents. One of the reasons for the low figures is the existence of alternatives to sentences of immediate imprisonment for the youngest criminals. Sentences of immediate imprisonment are used only as a last resort.

437. The Prison Act has with one exception no special provisions related to the imprisonment and treatment of adolescents in prison. The Act stipulates that the criminal's age shall be taken into consideration when assigning inmates to various prisons. The Prison Regulations contain special provisions for adolescents in prison. The aim of the provisions is to improve the conditions under which prison sentences are served in order to minimize the risk of harming the adolescent during imprisonment. For example, prison officials must follow the mental and physical development of adolescents closely and implement measures necessary to prevent any harm from coming to them. When choosing an institution for imprisonment, the individual's need for contact with his home, and the activity and rehabilitation opportunities offered, shall be taken into account. Young inmates shall at an early stage of their imprisonment be considered for transfer to an open institution, even if other conditions for such a transfer are not fulfilled. Prisons receiving convicted criminals under 18 years of age shall promptly notify the police, the probation and aftercare service, the child welfare office and the social welfare apparatus to determine which measures should be implemented during and after the individual's prison sentence. Inmates under 18 years of age shall be examined by a physician as soon as possible after arrival at the prison.

438. Special efforts shall be made to encourage young inmates to attend educational courses. A similar provision applies to physical activities. Particular restraint should be shown concerning the use of solitary confinement in order to discipline young inmates. Young inmates shall be considered for transfer to day-release centres regardless of the time-limits which otherwise apply. The provisions concerning short-term prison leave shall be applied in a liberal manner concerning young inmates, and young inmates should be allowed more frequent and longer visits than their fellow adult inmates, if facilities and staffing permit.

439. According to the Constitution, torture is prohibited, and according to the Penal Code the maximum penalty for adults is 21 years' imprisonment. For criminal acts committed before reaching 18 years of age the general maximum imprisonment term is 15 years and the penalty may without altering the form thereof be reduced below the minimum prescribed for the act, and, when circumstances so indicate, to a milder form of penalty (cf. sections 17 and 55 of the General Civil Penal Code of 22 May 1902, with subsequent amendments). The current provisions are considered adequate to ensure that children are not subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

440. Great importance is attached to rehabilitation and social reintegration of young criminals. Continuous efforts are made to improve the conditions under which adolescents serve their prison sentences. Reintegration programmes such as those of the Probation and Aftercare Service are very important. These programmes also include the social welfare services offered to other persons in need of support and following-up in difficult situations.

C. Children in situations of exploitation (arts. 32, 33, 34, 36, 35)

441. There are very few adolescents under 18 years of age who have full-time paid work in Norway. Most adolescents in the age group 16 to 18 years attend upper secondary school. However, many adolescents work part-time.

442. The working hours for children are regulated by chapter IX of the Working Environment Act. Employees under 18 years of age must have a period of rest of at least 12 hours between two work periods. As a rule, this rest period shall always include the time period from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. for employees under 16 years of age, and between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. for employees between 16 and 18 years of age. The working hours must not prevent the employee from attending school or benefiting from classes. If the employee is under 18 years of age, working hours shall not exceed 9 hours per day or 48 hours per week, and overtime is not permitted. The Act also stipulates that persons under 18 years of age attending school shall have at least four weeks vacation per year. They shall have at least two of these weeks during the summer holidays. The penalty for a violation of the provisions of this Act is prescribed in chapter 14 of the Act. There are separate penalty scales for employers, employees and parents.

443. The Ministry of Local Government and Labour may require that employers who employ children and adolescents keep lists of these employees. Such lists must be made available to the Labour Inspectorate.

444. According to Section 162 of the Penal Code any person who unlawfully manufactures, imports, acquires, stores, sends or conveys any substance that according to statutory provisions is deemed to be a drug shall be guilty of a drug felony. The possession and use of narcotics are prohibited and punishable according to section 22 (cf. 43 of Act No. 5 of 20 June 1964 regarding Medicaments). The definition of narcotic substances is set out in regulations issued pursuant to the Act.

445. According to the Alcohol Act, the minimum age for buying or being served beer and wine is 18 years, and the minimum age for buying and being served spirits is 20 years.

446. The use of alcohol by adolescents has declined in recent years. There are no national statistics for children under the age of 15, but statistics for the age group 15 to 20 show that alcohol consumption has declined since the mid-1980s.

447. Extensive measures have been implemented in order to protect children from drug and alcohol abuse. A national directorate has been established which is responsible for providing the general public with information on alcohol and narcotic substances. A great deal of such information is provided to children in primary and lower secondary schools. The directorate is also carrying out campaigns aimed at certain target groups, among them adolescents, in order to prevent the abuse of narcotics and alcohol. In addition, the directorate provides financial aid to non-governmental organizations which combat the use of drugs and alcohol. Several of these organizations work with children and adolescents in particular.

448. The central Government also provides financial support for research on drugs and alcohol, including the extent of their use, damaging effects and methods of treatment.

449. The Penal Code contains several provisions concerning sexual abuse of children. A person who commits, or is accessory to another person's committing an act of indecency with a person under 16 years of age is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years. If the person is under 14 years of age or there are other aggravating circumstances connected to the act, the offender may be liable to a longer prison sentence. A person who commits an act of indecency with a person under 18 years of age who is subject to the offender's authority or supervision is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year. If the persons who have committed the act of indecency are about equal in age and development, the penalty may be waived or, as an alternative in cases involving persons under 14 years of age, the penalty imposed may be below the minimum specified in this section of the Act. A mistake concerning the child's age shall as a general rule not exclude criminal liability. These provisions are laid down in sections 195-197 of the Penal Code.

450. A person who by force or by inducing fear for any person's life or health compels any person to commit an act of indecency or is accessory thereto is guilty of rape and liable to imprisonment according to section 192 of the Penal Code. A person who commits or is accessory to an act of indecency by means of threats or the misuse of a dependent relationship or of certain positions where the victim is under that person's authority or supervision, is also liable to imprisonment. Sexual intercourse with a blood relation in the descending line, or a foster-child, step-child, ward or person under 18 years of age who is subject to the offender's care, authority or supervision is a criminal act according to specific provisions of the Act.

451. It is a criminal act to mislead any person into engaging in prostitution or continuing such an occupation or to aid and abet or exploit another person's engaging in prostitution.

452. Any person who misleads a child under 16 years of age into indecent conduct shall be liable to imprisonment. For example, this provision is applicable when a child is misled into participating in a pornographic film.

453. According to the provision concerning pornography in the Penal Code, any person who possess or imports pictures, films, videotapes or the like, in which any person who is, must be regarded as being or is portrayed as being under 16 years of age, is represented in an indecent or pornographic manner, is liable to punishment.

454. Children who have been subjected to sexual abuse are entitled to damages (from the offender) according to the Damages Act if the conditions are fulfilled. Such children may also apply for and be awarded compensation up to NOK 150,000 from the central Government if the conditions are fulfilled and it is deemed reasonable to award such compensation in the case in question.

455. The examination of children under 14 years of age as witnesses in cases of immoral conduct must comply with special rules that apply during both the investigation and main hearing. The rules are intended to protect the child.

456. The Government presented a plan of action against the sexual abuse of children in June 1992. The most important objective of this plan of action is to prevent the sexual abuse of children, to uncover sexual abuse and to give prompt and proper assistance and treatment of sexually abused children. The plan has four primary objectives:

(a) To strengthen and systematize efforts to prevent the sexual abuse of children;

(b) To contribute to more effective disclosure, investigation and trial of cases involving sexual abuse of children;

(c) To contribute to stronger, more effective and better coordinated assistance and treatment programmes for children and adolescents subjected to sexual abuse;

(d) To raise the level of competence in this area and ensure adequate education and training of persons with a profession involving frequent contact with children.

457. The Government will present a report to the Storting on the sexual abuse of children in 1993.

458. Section 12 of the Penal Code lays down that some of the sections concerning sexual abuse of children also apply to acts committed by Norwegian citizens abroad. One example is section 195 concerning indecent intercourse with children under the age of 14. Two men have been sentenced in Norway pursuant to this section for acts committed in Thailand (Eidsivating High Court, 16 March 1990).

459. Provisions and measures for preventing exploitation of children have been described in previous paragraphs. Special reference in this connection can be made to the Child Welfare Act and the Children's Act, which in particular ensure the rights of children in this area.

460. Concerning the sale, trafficking in and abduction of children, reference is made to paragraphs 233-236 above on the abduction and paragraphs 222-231 on adoption.

D. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)

461. The Norwegian authorities have recognized the Sami as an indigenous population. Traditionally, most of the Sami population have lived by fishing, reindeer herding and agriculture. These are not just trades, but a way of life that was, and is, expressed through Sami traditions, language and culture. The Sami have the same citizenship rights as other Norwegian nationals and are protected against discrimination by the same statutory regulations. In addition, article 110 A of the Constitution provides for positive discrimination of the Sami people: "It is the responsibility of the State to create the conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and

develop their language, culture and way of life". The Constitution, the Act relating to the Sameting (a democratic body elected by and from the Sami people) and the Sami Act stipulate the authorities' responsibility to ensure that conditions are provided for the Sami people in Norway to safeguard and develop their language, culture and society.

462. The language provisions of the Sami Act establish that the Sami and Norwegian language have equal status in an administrative area encompassing six municipalities in northern Norway. The Act includes provisions pertaining to the right to use the Sami language in public administration, the courts and the health and social welfare sector. In addition, the Act relating to Primary and Lower Secondary Education establishes the right to instruction in the Sami language.

463. If a nursery school is established in a place where Sami is the main language and its activities are based on Sami culture, the nursery school is entitled to an additional grant from the central Government. The grant is intended to cover the additional expenses of providing a Sami language programme, for example, expenses related to the training of personnel, preparation and translation, and the procurement of Sami toys and educational material. Sami-speaking children who do not attend nursery schools based on the Sami language and culture may receive grants for native language training in the same manner as other children who speak a foreign language.

464. A total of 1,396 pupils are currently receiving instruction in the Sami language. Of these, 652 have Sami as their first language, 707 have Sami as their second language and 37 are taking Sami as an optional subject. During the last decade there has been an increase of about 4 per cent in the number of pupils who have Sami as a part of their curriculum.

465. Pursuant to the Act relating to Primary and Lower Secondary Education, all pupils in Sami regions are entitled to instruction in the Sami language. From the seventh grade, the pupils make this decision themselves. Pupils who receive instruction in the Sami language are exempted from one of the Norwegian language forms in the eighth and ninth grades.

466. Sami pupils outside Sami regions are also entitled to instruction in the Sami language if there are at least three pupils who speak Sami at the school in question.

467. The municipalities in the administrative area for the Sami language may make Sami compulsory in the primary and lower secondary schools.

468. The Sami upper secondary schools in Karasjok and Kautokeino provide instruction in Sami. At other upper secondary schools, the county governor must decide if instruction in the Sami language is to be offered.

469. The Sami Education Council is appointed by the Sameting. The primary task of the Council is to coordinate special measures for the Sami population in the educational sector, to provide guidance and information, and to act as

an advisory agency to the Ministry and the competent education councils. The Council shall take the initiative to develop and prepare master plans and curricula, textbooks and teaching aids, in addition to dealing with questions pertaining to the education and upgrading programmes for teachers in Sami regions.

470. Special Sami curricula have been prepared for the primary and lower secondary school. The objective of these curricula is to safeguard and develop the Sami identity, language and culture in the primary and lower secondary schools.

471. The government grants earmarked for the Sami (now transferred to the Sameting) have during the last decade been allocated to various programmes for improving the environment in which Sami children grow up. The objectives of these measures have been to strengthen the Sami children's and adolescents' identification and contact with their language and cultural background. Funds have been allocated to:

(a) Special reinforcement measures in regions where the Sami language, culture and way of life were threatened;

(b) Collection and distribution of traditional stories, games, songs and music;

(c) Development of toys, teaching aids, games, literature and theatre based on the Sami culture.

472. Solutions to various problems and the development of strategies in several areas are being sought in order to provide children and adolescents with better opportunities. Among the most important are:

(a) The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has appointed a committee to study and develop a health and social welfare plan for the Sami population in Norway;

(b) Funds have been allocated to the Commissioner for Children for a two-year project to collect more information about Sami children and their living conditions and situation. Children and adolescents will be used as sources of information;

(c) A research project has been started on the effect on Sami adolescents of their encounter with Norwegian culture.

473. Many measures have been implemented to ensure that immigrant children and adolescents have the opportunity to enjoy their own culture. These measures are not only designed to strengthen the culture of the immigrants, but also to establish common, multicultural meeting places for Norwegians and immigrants.

474. The Norwegian Council on Culture provides grants for the publication of books for children and young adults in their native languages.

475. Funds are allocated annually in the national budget for the procurement of immigrant literature to libraries. Special brochures listing the literature available and general library services are also distributed.

476. Pursuant to the Constitution, all inhabitants of Norway are entitled to freedom of religion. Religious communities and non-denominational philosophical societies are entitled to grants from the central Government and the municipalities. The various religious communities often play an important role in connection with safeguarding and developing the culture of their native countries.

477. The central Government provides grants that are specially earmarked for the training of foreign language pupils in Norwegian as well as their native languages. This training encompasses immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Grants are available at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level. Grants are also available for providing children who speak a foreign language with native language training in nursery schools.